On Review PDP Mapa Burl Drums and Gretsch Ridgeland Snares

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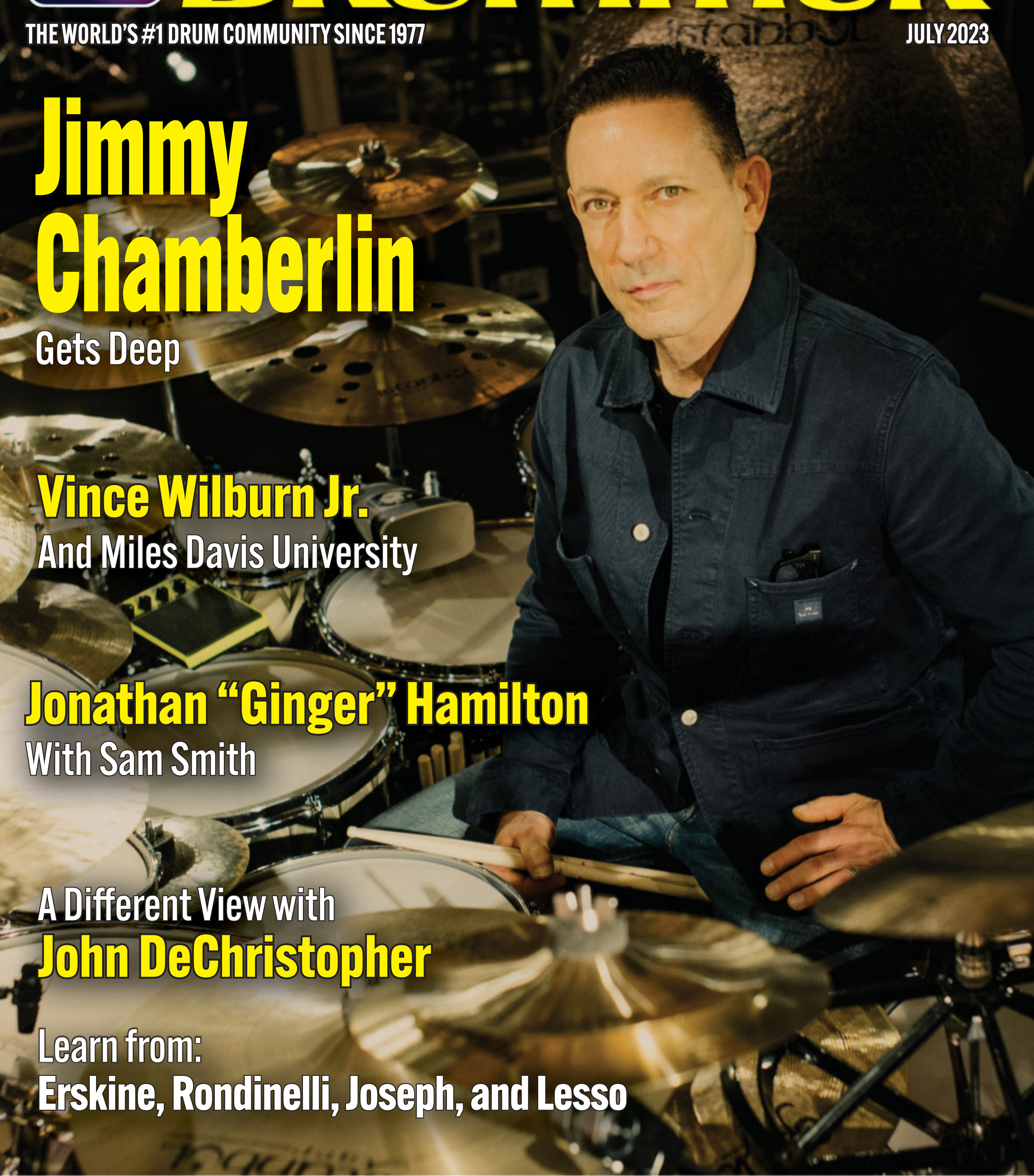

Jimmy Chamberlin
Gets Deep

Vince Wilburn Jr.
And Miles Davis University

Jonathan "Ginger" Hamilton
With Sam Smith

A Different View with
John DeChristopher

Learn from:
Erskine, Rondinelli, Joseph, and Lesso

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By Mark Griffith

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Cover photo by Max Fairclough
Contents photo by Corrine Luxon

Corrine Luxon

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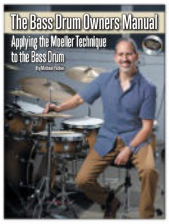
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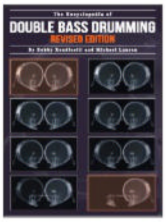
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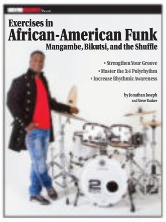
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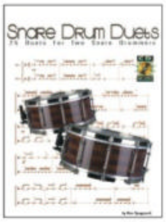
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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Why is One Never Enough?

As a self-confessed *"snare drum junkie,"* I often wonder why owning one snare drum is just never enough. As a fan of 1920s Ludwig two-piece Nickel Over Brass (NOB), Black Beauty's, and Slingerland Radio King's, why can't I just stop there? I'm NOT a collector. I understand and respect "collectors," but it's *just not me*. I play and gig every one of my snares, they are my tools of the trade.

If the Tama Bell Brass and my Keplinger cast steel sound so good, why do I love my Ludwig Hammered Bronze and Supraphonic so much? If the crack of my Brady Jarrah and Sheoak snares are so perfect, why do I also have my Yamaha Bamboo? I love the sound of solid shell snares, so that means I love my old Radio King's, right? Of course! But why do I cherish my Longo Walnut and Cherry solid shells snares? Not to mention that old Noble and Cooley that has been around the world with me a few times. But as much as I love those wonderful solid shells, my Eames 24 ply Master Model and 8" Naturaltone that Joe MacSweeney made sound *sooo* good. And if the 8" Naturaltone sounds so great then why have my 8" Yamaha Recording Custom, they are just about the same drum, right?

Yet, it's not just wood and metal. The Remo Gold Grown snare is a great snare for jazz and brushes, and my Tempus 8" fiberglass drum is a real all-around workhorse. Speaking of workhorses, my 6.5" 1980s Yamaha Brass and my Slingerland Chrome Over Brass 6.5" Sound King (with a replaced strainer) fit that definition perfectly. But it's not just about deeper snares. After I recorded with a 4" Arnie Lang snare and saw pictures of Roy Haynes playing a 4" Ludwig Downbeat back in the day, I absolutely fell in love with 4" deep snares. Maybe that's why I have six of them now.

A few years back I saw Dennis Chambers playing a Pearl Symphonic Snare with a triple strainer it sounded amazing and unique. I called Dennis and we talked about how much he loved that drum, so I grabbed one, and it is a GREAT drum set snare. Now Dennis' killer new Pearl signature snare has that same strainer. And speaking of orchestral snares my Yamaha 5.5" Concert Copper with their concert strainer is one of my favorite recording drums.

But it's just not the expensive ones. After seeing Jim Keltner set up an entire kit of snares back in the 90s with Bill Frisell, I obsessed over finding a Yamaha Stage Custom mountable 10 and 12 in Black, they were only 100 bucks each, but when I found them, you would have thought that I just found an original Slingerland Black Beauty (*no, I don't have one of those.*) And speaking of inexpensive drums— why is the Ludwig Acrolite such a good sounding snare. Wasn't it originally a "student" model snare?

Most recently, I have discovered the unique sound of 15" snares. It's no surprise, I now have three. See what I mean, why is one never enough??? I guess it comes down to many different colors on the palette. That's my story, and I'm sticking to it. At least snares don't take up as much space as drum sets... *or cars.*

Listen and Learn!
Mark Griffith
Editor-In-Chief, Director of Content

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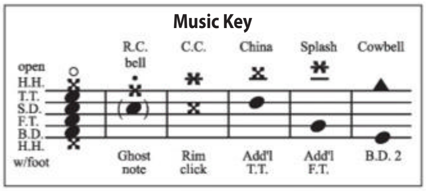

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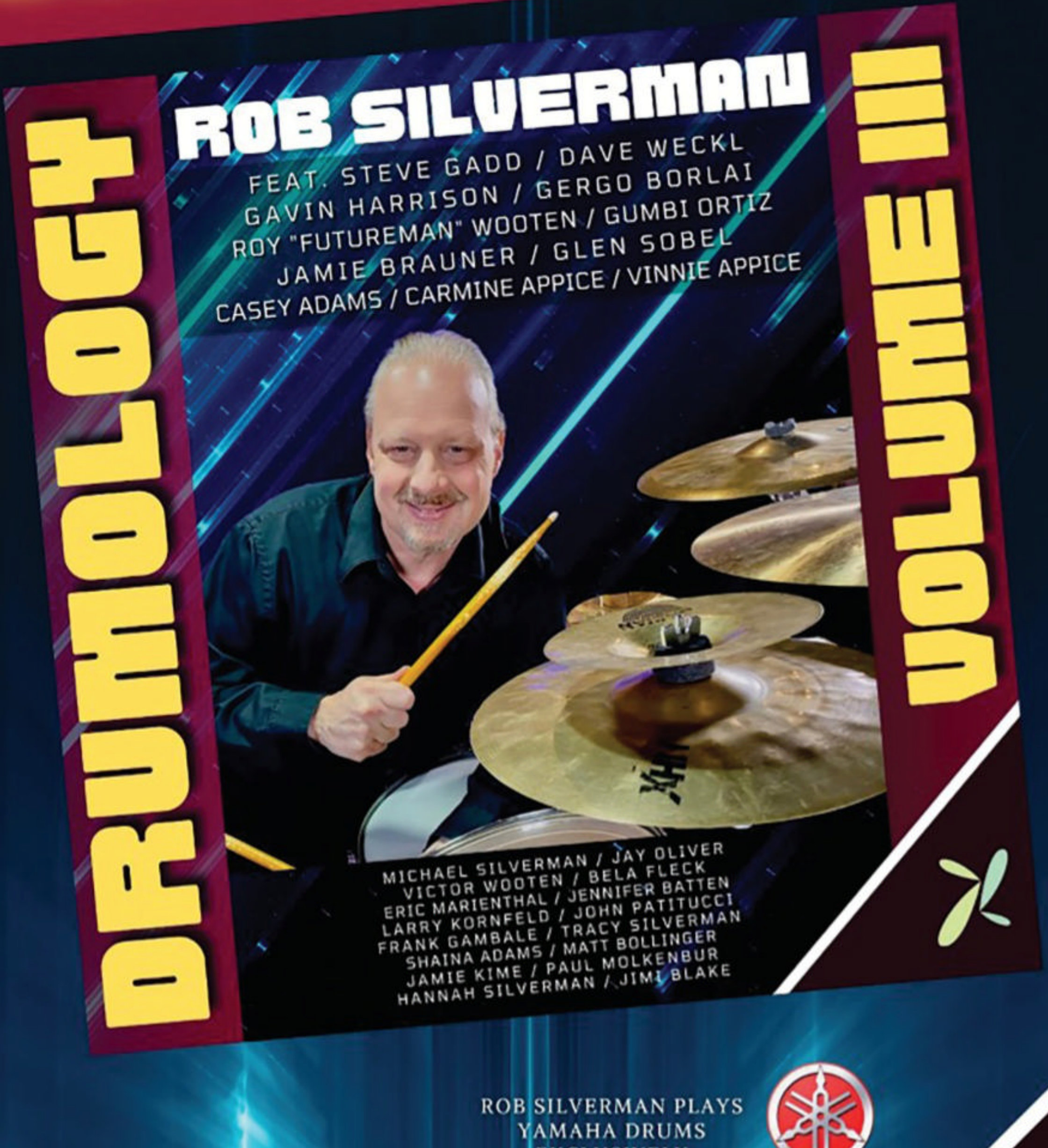
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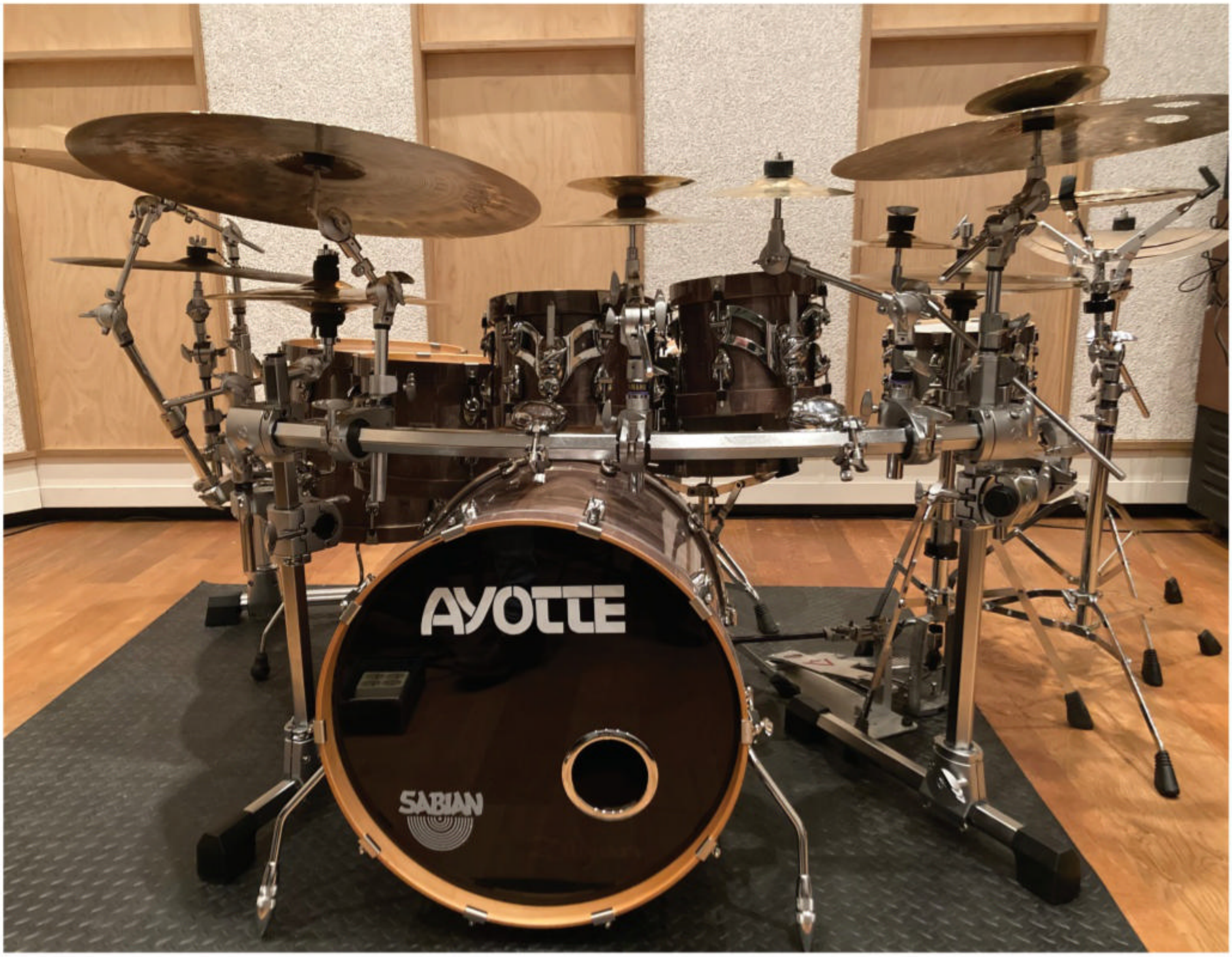
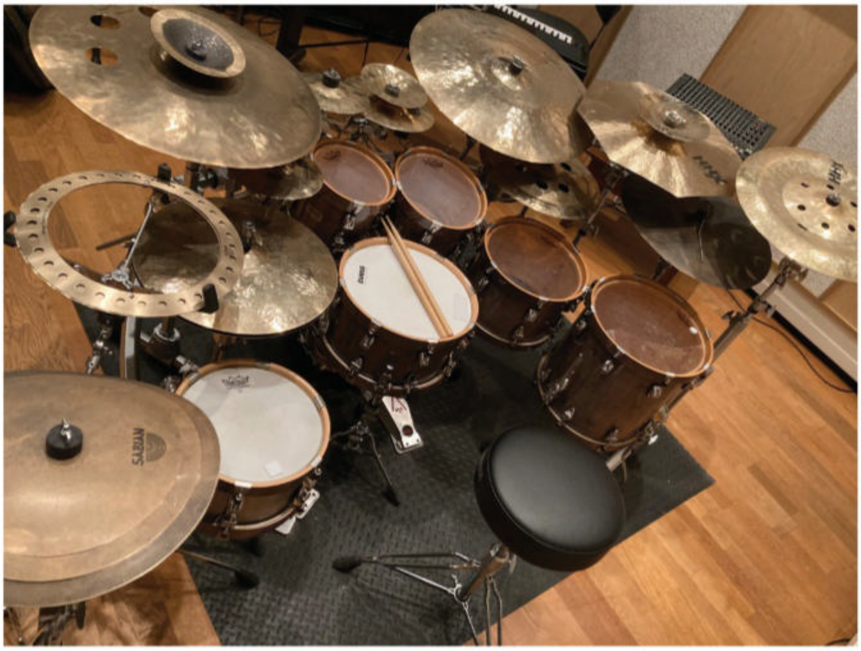
A Dutch Beauty



Dutch drummer Bas Prins has invited *Modern Drummer* and our readers to enjoy some pictures of his beautiful Ayotte kit. Bas uses a special "one of a kind" 10" Keplinger snare. with his kit. Also pictured are an assortment of custom and prototype Sabian Cymbals from his large collection of limited edition and vintage Sabian bronze. Bedankt Bas!



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Keeping Score

By Peter Erskine

Music should not be a contest. The great Hungarian composer Bela Bartok is quoted as having said that competitions should be for horses, not musicians. He refused to sit on competition juries because he didn't want the decisions on his conscience. Jazz educators are generally not so privileged, and there are times when we are called upon to render judgement upon musicians who are playing on a bandstand. My conscience has bothered me from time to time after playing judge, jury, and kingmaker during a music festival. Those good ol' "win-win" moments feel out of reach when writing down such observations like:

Impossible to understand / appreciate group dynamic because the bass is too loud.
Overall sum seems less than the parts.
I'm not a huge djembe fan.
Drummer's brushes on cymbals ineffectual.
Annoying harmonic form.
A lot of "Mickey Mousing" going on.
Drummer's x-stick sound is annoying (the DRUMMER is annoying…)
The whole hipster vibe is getting boring.
Tenor sax sounds like a tenor kazoo.
"Summertime" in whatever time signature … WHY?
NO SWING in 4/4 (all day).
Too many rimshot accents (but the first drummer to smile).
The odd time signs all add up to a big nothing.
All rimshots from drummer – BOO!!!
A sameness weighs down the overall effect.
Needs to breathe more.

That's the summation of my notes for six bands (in addition to a numerical grid used for computing and keeping score of how each band and its players fared) that I penned one morning while sitting in judgment at a jazz festival. Reading through these notes to myself, I'm struck by how familiar these themes feel to me. The score card is as much (or more) about the scorer than the young musicians … *or is it?*

I should mention that, during my teenaged years as a student at the Interlochen Arts Academy, our band director Dave Sporny refused to enter the school's big band (known then as the "Studio Orchestra") into any competitions. We would travel and appear as guests, but not subject ourselves to either the temptation of playing to score or the whim of some music educator. Looking back, I'm glad.

Meanwhile, here I am sitting in a hot seat that was not of my planning or doing. Let's look at each point I penned with some analysis.

1. Impossible to understand / appreciate group dynamic because the bass is too loud.

It only takes ONE instrument being too loud to in the mix to effectively destroy a band's sound. Most of the time, however, this is not the band's fault! A reminder to always be on-guard for over-zealous purveyors of a house PA mix with a subwoofer. Basically, it comes down to this: if it's jazz, unplug the subwoofer. In addition, no instrument should sound unnaturally loud.

2. Overall sum seems less than the parts.

The very meaning of a band should be that the sum or everyone's playing of the music amounts to something greater than the added-up qualities or quantities of the musicians. That extra something is the very magic and essence of musicmaking.

3. I'm not a huge djembe fan.

Self-explanatory.

4. Drummer's brushes on cymbals ineffectual.
Brushes on cymbals are a waste of time most of the time.

5. Annoying harmonic form.
I don't like it when a song's form comes to its end, but that end is pretty much the same as the song's beginning, it's static and puts me in a musical groundhog day state of being.

6. A lot of "Mickey Mousing" going on.
By this, I mean that the musicians are quoting one player's ideas back to them as opposed to either keeping the groove going or providing intelligent counterpoint. There's too much noise in life, music can and should be some form of a cathedral or temple (no matter the setting); set your sights high and aim for the best choices. How? By LISTENING and by learning to trust the music, the other musicians and yourself.

7. Drummer's cross-stick sound is annoying (the DRUMMER is annoying…)
Drummer was not listening to the sound he was creating. The cross-stick volume and tone were disagreeable to my ears and, so, I'm trusting that I was not the only one. My comment about the DRUMMER annoying me is that his willful indifference to the actual SOUND is a pet-peeve, if not downright illegal.

8. The whole hipster vibe is getting boring.
Head-bobbing. Knit hat-wearing. Yawn.

9. Tenor sax sounds like a tenor kazoo.
Good tone is important. There's more to making music (being musical) than pushing down keys or blowing air into a horn.

10. "Summertime" in whatever time signature … WHY?
Again, this ought to be self-explanatory. Here's a handy little test: I ask myself, "would anyone want to listen to this more than once? "If the answer is "no," then re-aim your esthetic sights. I submit that there's no good reason to play George Gershwin's "Summertime" in seven … simply none. This thought is better expressed, however, by saxophonist, educator and jazz commentator non pareil Branford Marsalis, quoted here from a short piece he contributed to *Jazz Times* magazine concerning the late great Art Blakey (with whom he began his professional career and toured with in 1982-3).

Art told me I had to play a ballad. I didn't know how to play ballads. So I did what young people always do: started changing all the chords so I could sound less sad. So he walks by and goes, "What the hell is that?" I said, "Man, I don't wanna do this crap! You're making me do it, I'm just trying to make it hip." He said, "This song is written by George Gershwin. George Gershwin has written an opera; he has written symphonic pieces; he wrote some of the greatest pop songs in the history of American pop music; he does not need your sorry ass to make him hip. You will play the song as written." At the time it was awful, but five years later, I'm like, "Boy, I'm glad he made me do that."

So … don't listen to me, listen to Art Blakey!

11. NO SWING in 4/4 (all day).
Come on, gang. SOMETHING has to swing if this is a jazz festival!

12. Too many rimshot accents (but the first drummer to smile).
Okay, so the drummer was smiling, and I liked that. But what I did NOT like were all those head/rim combinations. Accents lose their meaning, plus the wide frequency response of the rim/head whack has an unfair advantage in the decibel department over most anything else happening on the bandstand.

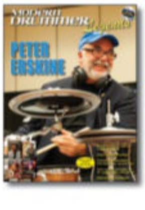
13. The odd time signs all add up to a big nothing.
This observation feels redundant. Don't blame me.

14. All rimshots from drummer – BOO!!!
Here we go again.

15. A sameness weighs down the overall effect.
Everything new is old again. Be clever in your use of dynamics, crystal clear when providing rhythmic information, and spend more time listening to old jazz recordings. I promise that you'll be astonished and delighted by what you hear.

16. Needs to breathe more.
A wind player or a vocalist HAS to take a breath when they're playing, and this automatically creates a space. Rhythm section players, by and large, are not affected this way but we'd do well to treat our instruments as if they were living and breathing partners of ours. Breathing demands that space be observed; not only observed but held sacred. "Air" is essential to life itself, so don't be shy about using it in your music.

When the four judges convened, it turned out that we had all privately chosen the same band to be the winner, and so the "win-win" felt better than it might otherwise have been. I did my best to be gracious to all of the musicians who braved that stage so early in the day. Despite my judgmental misgivings, I can honestly report that their musicianship made my day better. Seems like the sum WAS greater than the parts. I guess the lesson here is that we may listen critically, but let's not be so darned critical of ourselves or others.



Check out Peter's drummer profile page, and get a copy of his Legends book at moderndrummer.com

NEW and NOTABLE

Sabian Re-Introduces 22" HH Todd Sucherman Sessions Ride

SABIAN is proud to announce the release of the 22" HH Todd Sucherman Sessions Ride cymbal. Normally Limited Editions are just that….limited! Well, in the case of the 22" HH Sessions Ride, they've just "Unlimited" it! This cymbal, which was a collaboration with Todd Sucherman, was first introduced as a Limited Edition in 2019 and literally sold out in days. However, it didn't stop there, as the demand for this amazing cymbal has been high since then. Even Todd noticed that saying, "In my touring with Styx and talking with drummers from all over the world, I'm frequently asked about this cymbal and if there is any way they can get their hands on one. Until now, I've had to say no. I'm so pleased that SABIAN has made the decision to bring this cymbal back and make it part of their ongoing product offering." While this is exactly the same cymbal as the one introduced in 2019, it does have a slightly different logo treatment, and is not numbered nor does it come with a signed certificate.

The 22 HH Sessions ride is fully hand hammered, lathed, and polished, then a second layer of hand hammering is applied to build in more control. The combination of articulation and spread produced by the extra hammering and coarser HH style lathing makes the 22" HH Sessions ride an amazing instrument for both the studio and stage. Its stunning appearance is definitely a bonus. We're thrilled to welcome this cymbal to our 2023 product offering. **sabian.com**

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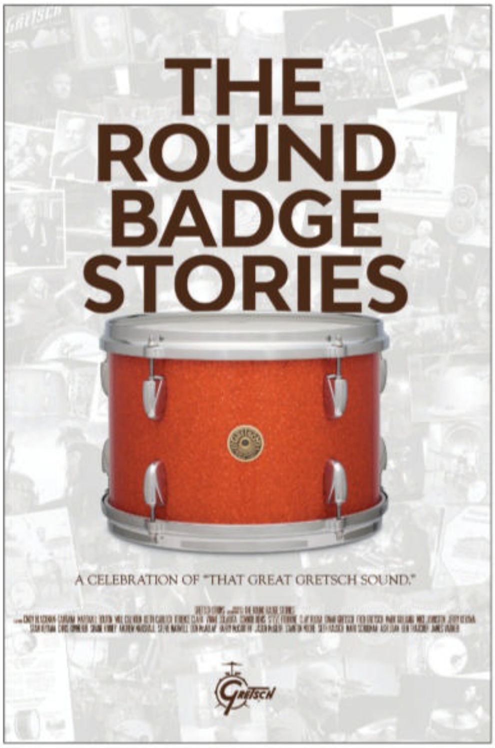
Gretsch Drums Premiere *The Round Badge Stories* New Documentary

A Celebration of 'That Great Gretsch Sound'

Gretsch Drums are proud to premiere *The Round Badge Stories*, a new documentary exploring the heritage, uniqueness and mystique of 'That Great Gretsch Sound.' Watch the video at **gretschdrums.com/the-round-badge-stories.**

Produced as part of the 140th anniversary celebrations of Gretsch drums, this new investigative documentary features original and exclusive new footage from around the world. *The Round Badge Stories* was premiered at the Gretsch Night in New York City concert at The Cutting Room club.

Narrated by the legendary Vinnie Colaiuta (Sting, Frank Zappa, Jeff Beck) the 42 minute documentary will explore the mystery of 'That Great Gretsch Sound' through interviews with over fifteen top Gretsch ambassadors and key industry figures including Fred and Dinah Gretsch.


THE ROUND BADGE STORIES
A CELEBRATION OF "THAT GREAT GRETSCH SOUND."
Gretsch

Shot on location in high definition, the film will see Gretsch drummers Cindy Blackman Santana talking at the Santana studios in Las Vegas, Steve Ferrone filmed at the Tom Petty's Heartbreakers clubhouse in Los Angeles, Ash Soan recorded at his Windmill Studios in Norfolk (UK) and Royal Blood's Ben Thatcher videoed at the bands studio in Brighton (UK). Other artists and interviewees featured include Andrew Marshall (Billie Eilish), Mark Guiliana (St Vincent), Keith Carlock (Steely Dan), Terence Clark (Keith Urban) and Don McAuley (Charlie Watts drum Tech).

For more information about the Gretsch 140th Anniversary and to see the new documentary *The Round Badge Stories* visit **gretschdrums.com/the-round-badge-stories** or check the Gretsch social media. **#GretschDrums140**

Latin Percussion Introduces New Rhythm Rods andSingle Brass Timbales

New synthetic and natural Rhythm Rods

Latin Percussion (LP) is proud to launch its new range of synthetic and natural Rhythm Rods. The new rods, hybrids of regular sticks and brushes, offer drummers and percussionists greater versatility and a wider sonic range when playing.

The new synthetic rods are made by binding many thin, high-grade polymer shafts together. All feature a comfortable, non-slip rubber grip, an adjustable sleeve, and O-Rings so users can fine-tune their sonic palette by controlling the spread of the rods.

The LP9911 Lightweight Rhythm Rods (7/8" diameter) and LP9912 Heavyweight Rhythm Rods (1-1/8" diameter) feature an exclusive reinforced core to give them superior balance, stability, and playability. The LP9913 -Synthetic Lightweight Adjustable Core Rhythm Rods (7/8" diameter) and the LP9914 Synthetic Heavyweight Adjustable Core Rhythm Rods (1-1/8" diameter) have a solid core with a retractable tip. This provides stability while allowing the user to set the perfect amount of articulation.

The LP9917 Natural Rhythm Rods (1-1/4" diameter) are 13" long and are made from thin strips of organic material bound together. This natural material delivers enhanced dynamic control and rebound for drummers allowing users to customize their tone.

The new range of LP Rhythm Rods offer drummers and percussionists a balance between sticks and brushes. They provide a wide range of creative textures: Wide, open rods provide a softer attack closer to the brush end of the sound spectrum making their warm sound ideal for small room acoustic performances. When the O ring is adjusted to make the spread tighter, the articulation increases, and rods begin to behave more like sticks. The denser strike of the tighter spread gives a fat, rich sound when recording. To find out more about the limited-edition LP Rhythm Rods, plus all the other Latin Percussion products, please go to **https://www.lpmusic.com/. #wearerhythm**

'LP Your Kit' With New Tonal Textures

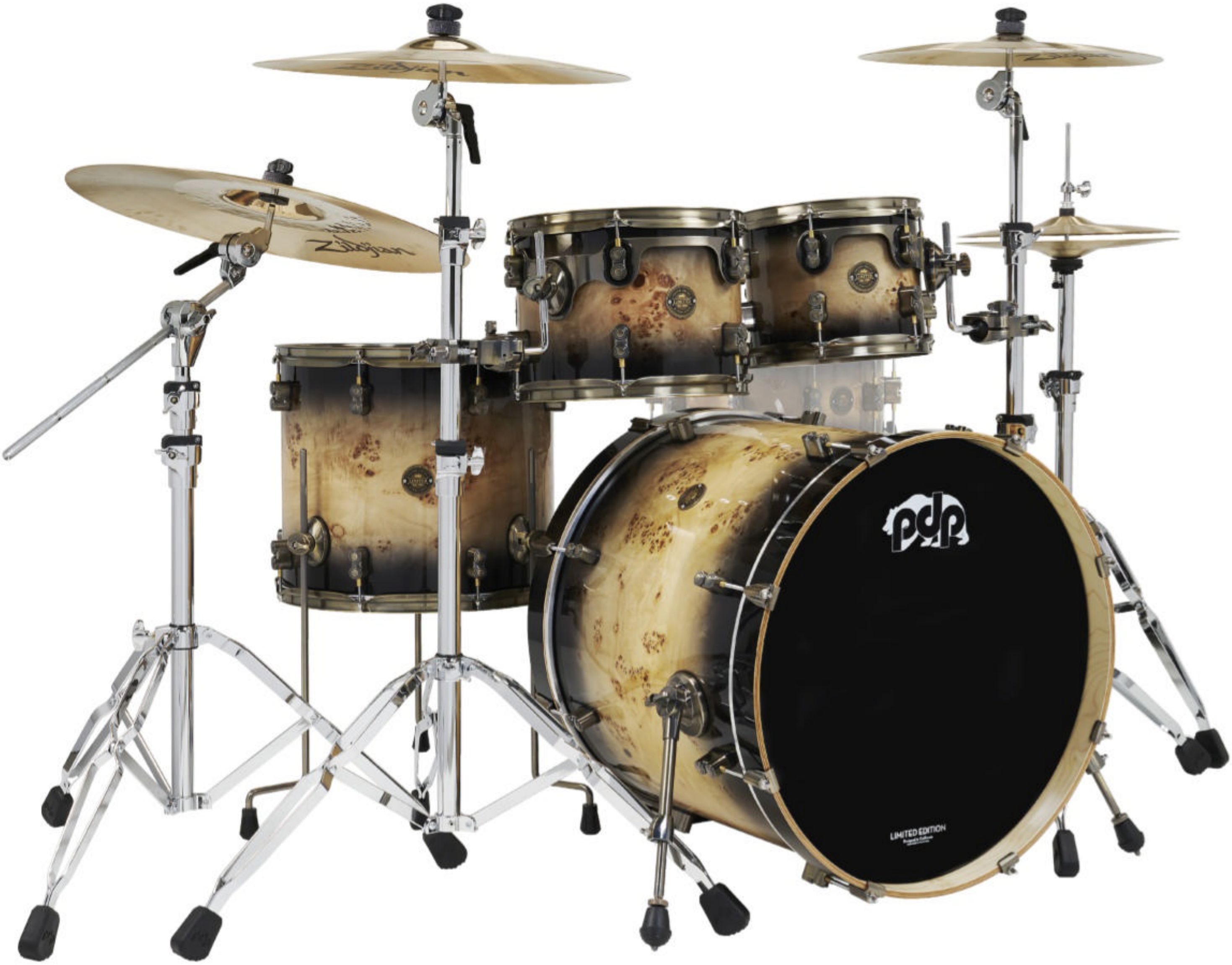
Latin Percussion (LP) introduces single Brass Timbales, extending the range of percussion instruments drummers can use to 'LP Your Kit'. The inspiring 'LP Your Kit' array of drum set friendly percussion instruments offers drummers and percussionists the ability to add a wide range of sounds, effects, and tonal textures to their playing. All the instruments are kit ready and easily mountable.

The new 6-½" Brass Timbales, fitted with chrome hardware, come in two sizes, 13" (LP6513-B) and 14" (LP6514-B) and a heavy-duty mount bracket. These new singles offer the same features as LP's Prestige Timbales including compact sizing and a high-quality, patented top tuning system for rapid adjustments. The drums are crafted with a hefty rim and wide rib placement build to enhance rim shots and cascara. The substantial mount bracket allows the Brass Timbales to be fitted to any 3/8" – 1/2"mounting arm. These new stylish add-on drums will bring an authentic timbale sound to any rig that is a warm, bright tone with a dry cascara. To find out more about the single Brass Timbales, plus all the other Latin Percussion products, please go to **lpmusic.com/ #wearerhythm**

PDP Concept Series LTD Mapa Burl 4-Piece Shell Pack & Matching Snare Drum

A limited-edition gem, perfect for play and display

By Jason Mehler



This year, Pacific Drums and Percussion (PDP) introduced a stunning Mapa Burl drum kit & matching snare drum. These limited production drums have a look that stands out among the other PDP drum kit offerings. In our exclusive product close-up for this month, we'll take these limited-edition drums for a spin.

What's in the Box?

The 4-Piece shell pack comes with 8 x 10 and 9 x 12 rack toms, a 14 x 16 floor tom, and an 18 x 22 kick drum. The four drums are shipped with the bass drum and floor tom disassembled to allow them to fit in a single box. Along with the drums (shells, rims, hoops & tuning rods) you will find Remo UC top and bottom heads, and a pair of Bass Drum Muffling Pillows and a drum key. The matching 5.5″ x 14″ snare drum ships in its own box, as it is sold separately. As expected, cymbals, stands, pedals and drum throne are NOT included, so keep that in mind.

Construction, Finish & Hardware

The 7-ply shells are made from 100% European maple and wrapped in an eye-catching Mapa Burl veneer with a black burst lacquer coating. The antique bronze-finished hardware consists of dual-turret lugs, DW's suspended tom mount system (STM) and True-Pitch Tuning™ rods. The toms and snare feature triple-flanged steel rims while the bass drum uses wooden hoops finished in black lacquer. The snare drum is equipped with DW's MAG Throw-off™ system. The circular "PDP Limited" badge adorns each drum in the set.

First Impression

I have to say that these drums look spectacular in my opinion. They have a sort-of Steampunk vibe, which I love. As I was pulling them out of the box for this review, the "oohs & aahs" erupted behind me from a small crowd of on-lookers (my kids). The wood finish really draws you in. Each drum's burl pattern is unique. Aiming a light onto the drum's surface reveals all the shiny, marble waves and dark knots that wood workers gawk over. The black lacquer burst adds depth and provides a nice gradient base under the contrasting antique bronze hardware. Though Mapa Burl is a more common burl wood, a friend in the woodworking industry was still impressed by the large, beautiful sheet of Mapa Burl veneer used for the 22" bass drum. The insides of the drum shells and bearing edges are cleanly sanded with no noticeable defects present, although there was a slight bit of saw dust leftover from manufacturing that should be wiped clean before assembling.

Assembly

When installing the heads on the drums, I was impressed by the hardware quality. The rims and tension rods feel "heavy-duty", as do the floor tom legs, rack tom mounts and bass drum spikes. One minor thing that I've noticed is that the True-Pitch Tuning™ rods have a slight resistance (by design) when you turn them, which is great for preventing back-out while playing, but also make the "finger-tight" tuning method obsolete as you will need the drum key to screw down the tuning rods to the point of making contact with the washer and rim.

Tuning and Playing: Bass Drum

I chose to muffle the bass drum with a small bed pillow instead of the provided muffles due to the adhesive Velcro strip that I was not willing to attach to review drums. Playing the bass drum with the supplied Remo UC heads and a simple bedroom pillow produced an aggressive punch with well-formed low end that was satisfying from both behind and in front of the kit.

Snare Drum

The snare drum is equipped with a Remo UC coated head. When struck it produces a lively, bright sound that isn't overly "pingy". The crack sound generated when playing rimshots is clear and full-bodied where all the snare drum's components are present in the sound. I did notice that the triple-flanged hoops have a sharper edge to them than I'm used to. The edge likely has a positive effect on the rimshot sound but might eat drum sticks faster than a flatter-edged hoop would.

pdp
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The maple snare drum delivers exceptional sound across a wide range of tunings, including low, medium, and high. The 20 strand snare wires produce a crisp articulate response at any volume. Buzz rolls are smooth like butter thanks to the drum's resonance, which vibrates enough to help mask inconsistencies and pulsing. The snare wire tension is easily fine-tuned, and the MAG Throw-off™ makes disengaging the snare wires a breeze. With the snare off, there is no snare buzz no matter how hard the drums are hit. I found it fun while playing the kit to make sounds with the throw-off lever by toggling the snare wires on and off.

Rack Toms

The rack toms have UC Clear Remo heads on top and bottom. When struck, they are quick and punchy with a nice tone and medium to long sustain depending on tuning. The note is well defined and doesn't get lost among the other drums. I found the toms to sound good with low to medium tuning, although a change of heads would allow for even lower tuning, as the thin stock UC heads start to wobble and growl below a turn & a half of the tension rods.

Floor Tom

Like the rest of the kit, the floor tom has an impressive stance with strong hardware. When struck, it produces a meaty low-end, with medium-sustain. Again, I think the floor tom would benefit from a change of heads as the thinner UC heads slap back a little too much for my taste. Having said that, a little muffling could calm it down a bit.

In Conclusion

For the price, PDP has outdone themselves with this Limited-Edition shell pack and snare drum. I'm not implying that $2,298 (shell pack $1,999 + snare $299) is cheap, but the style and specs are on par with some pricier high-end drum kits. My wife wants to keep it in the living room as an art piece! All kidding aside, if these drums are in your price range and you are looking for a drum kit with captivating aesthetics that is versatile and sounds great, I'd say the 2023 Limited Edition Mapa Burl Shell Pack & Snare Drum is a strong option to consider. Find these drums at:
pacificdrums.com/drums/2023LTD

Gretsch USA Custom Ridgeland Snare Drums

That NEW Great Gretsch Sound

By Brian Hil

The Gretsch badge says "Drum Makers Since 1883." OK, that's something that gets my attention. They Started in Brooklyn but have been making drums in Ridgeland, South Carolina since the mid 1980's and continue to make good on "That Great Gretsch Sound!" This makes the Gretsch Drum company one of the longest running drum makers in history….and they're made in America!

To my pleasant surprise, I received two of the newly formulated USA Ridgeland Snare Drums on my front porch to review in my favorite color, *ROUND*! These drums looked great coming out of the box. I couldn't wait to get these two down to the studio and dig into them.

Gretsch sent a 6.5 x 14 ten lug, and a 5 x 14 eight lug drums. Both drums are identical with the exception of shell depth and the number of lugs. Before I get into the new shell, let's run down the nicely chrome plated hardware.

Classic Hardware

The lugs were the familiar Gretsch lugs that I always referred to as "Rocket" lugs because of their shape. Counter hoops were 4mm die-cast, top and bottom. These drums also came stock with the ever-popular Lightning Throw-Off, 20 strand wire snares, Remo heads, and (of course) the traditional Gretsch Round Badge surrounding the vent hole.

New Hybrid Shell and New Bearing Edge Designs

Here's where the big differences start. Paul Cooper is the Master Drum Builder for Gretsch. Paul says this about these drums, "This is a drum I've been wanting to make for many years. I'm talking maybe 15 years. By taking maple, gum, and poplar, it gave me the opening to make an even thicker snare shell than what we normally do. With the combination of those plies and that shell, I knew we'd have a killer-sounding snare drum. The fact that we were doing a hybrid shell also made me want to do an edge

that I've wanted to do. That (new edge) gives you the warmth of the round-over edge, and you still get the attack of the 30-degree edge. Making all those components together, I think we've come out with a really great sounding snare drum."

Gretsch is not giving up too much more additional information on this shell as it is indeed a proprietary secret, but I can tell you that the thickness is almost a half an inch thick! Obviously, this shell needs no reinforcing rings.

The Sound

Now for the fun part, the sound. At first strike, I was blown away by the "presence" of both of these drums! I was really taken aback. They both sounded like great snare drums, and their sensitivity was impressive. The harder I hit, the more these drums gave back, with no distortion or unpleasant over-tones. No matter where I took these drums from a tuning stand-point, I was happy. Obviously, the lower the tuning, the wider the note. I also found a really nice set of videos on-line that display the tuning ranges these snares.

The differences in these two drums were somewhat predictable. The 6.5" deep shell with ten lugs was a powerful force and seriously controlled! It doesn't bark, it bites with incredible sound. The 5" shell with eight lugs, was super friendly and brought a more open, vintage-like sound. It might well be one of my favorite eight lug drums to date.

These snares are warm, earthy, open, powerful, and extremely sensitive. I found I could easily get loud when playing these snares, so I started to pull my velocity back and let the drums do the work. The best part for me was the "presence" of these two drums, they are incredible instruments, and I can't think of any application that they wouldn't be great in.

I found some on-line pricing that put the 6.5" drum at around $1049.00 and the 5" drum at $719.00. The finishes are offered in Gretsch Nitron, Satin, or Gloss Lacquer. There is no doubt in my mind that these USA Ridgeland Custom Snare drums are seriously high-grade percussion instruments. You won't go wrong choosing one of these. In fact, they're a perfect matching set that complement each other perfectly!

Paul Cooper adds, "Our crew comes to work every day and builds these beautiful drums, and this drum really conveys what we're trying to do. The fact that it's named the Ridgeland Snare Drum- it's really a tribute to them, and I believe it's part of the mojo you get with a Gretsch drum."

From what I can see, these USA Custom Ridgeland Snare Drums make good on "That Great Gretsch Sound." These are drummer's drums, born in the South and made to inspire. Check 'em out at **Gretschdrums.com.**

Max Fairclough

Jimmy Chamberlin

The Why of Drumming

By Mark Griffith

Neither Jimmy Chamberlin nor the Smashing Pumpkins need an introduction. They are both creative and intelligent entities with a limitless scope, and the Pumpkins' ambitious new release *Atum*, proves this yet again. Jimmy's creative enthusiasm for all things drumming is a breath of fresh air, and his commitment to the craft of drumming is unparalleled. All there is left to say is listen and learn.

MD: The new Smashing Pumpkins record *Atum* is an intense musical experience. What can you tell me about the inspiration and the inception of the record, both musically and drumistically?
JC: It's a continuation of the story started in *Mellon Collie* and *Machina*. The number three seems to be a recurring theme in the Pumpkins world. Point being, it's always good to have a destination when you start a project. Billy [Corgan] had written the back story for this three-record opera before he even started writing the music. He read me the story about this kind of dystopian earth with an orbiting prison around it where people were kind of sentenced to this perpetual purgatory and solitude. As a drummer and somebody who's an accompanist, I create musical opportunities, support narrative, and I support the composition. It's a dream come true to have a story like this. In jazz, if you know the lyrics to "Night and Day" it gives you the opportunity to make better musical and drumming choices, so it was exciting to have the narrative and backstory of *Atum*. Musically, it's similar to the ideology we used on the previous record *Cyr*, which was that we wanted to make a Pumpkins record without using or leaning on the old tropes that we leaned on in the past, heavy syncopated drums, big guitar solos, and those types of things. We wanted to strip it down to the core of the narrative. Then, in an adult way, without neutering ourselves, we could create something that's both current and

composed, with a modern architecture, that still sounds like us. I think Billy spent about nine months writing the outlines of the music. I went to his studio, and we recorded some obvious drum loops that would go along with the music. He worked on the lyrics and the arrangements and then in January of 2021, he sent me the three albums in Pro Tools files. I spent the next two months in my studio writing drum parts. In the beginning I was sending files and asking Billy *what do you think of this?* But after about four songs, we figured we had the general vibe. When I do big projects like this, if I have the opportunity to show up with no notes and a real understanding of the music, I like to do that. So I drilled down and I showed up at Blackbird in March of 2021 knowing all of the songs and arrangements. We spent around 20 days recording drum tracks. Working with Billy is very inspiring because he just never stops working or challenging himself as an artist, and like all great artists, he raises the level of those around him.

In regard to my general take— I'm a big jazz guy, my dad was a clarinet player, so I grew up on Benny Goodman and Krupa. The first concert I ever saw was the Oscar Peterson trio with Ella Fitzgerald on vocals and Joe Pass playing guitar. I was 12 years old at that point, and that's when I decided I wanted to play music for a living. I still get chills when I think about that experience. I feel more philosophically connected to people like Paul Motian, Thelonious Monk, Bill Evans, and Miles Davis. Not in an architectural way, but in a philosophical way. The Pumpkins are not fans of repeating, we'd rather roll the dice on something new, than make our second record all over again.

MD: I can hear your drumming supporting the massive plot line that Billy is providing compositionally, is that sort of how you see it?

JC: Absolutely. I just did a jazz quartet recording with Frank Catalano, Randy Ingram, and Julian Smith here in Chicago. As you know, in jazz when you're soloing, you're composing in real time under the gun, emoting in real time on the bandstand and on stage, it's a very pure form of art. People always ask me what's the difference between playing in a jazz quartet and playing with the Pumpkins. In the Pumpkins we could take a year to make five minutes' worth of music. In the quartet you've only got five minutes to make five minutes' worth of music.

But to your point, my sensibility, and my desire to be supportive of the narrative doesn't change. I feel like both gigs are the same. It's not predicated on how many drum fills I play or how many choruses of a solo I take— it's all really predicated on making good musical choices and making good choices that are congruent. That's where I point my laser 99% of the time. Every drummer gushes at the opportunity to play free and to play all over the bar. I've certainly had those opportunities. The Pumpkins and Billy have always been an incredible champion for my playing. They have really encouraged me to be myself. Once Billy figured out that I was a Mahavishnu, Return to Forever, Weather Report, Tony Williams Lifetime guy it really did change the way the band wrote music. We started off being a two and four, jangly pop, drum machine band. Then we went on to become the band that recorded *Gish*, which was very Tony Williams, Bobby Caldwell-Captain Beyond, Ian Paice type of drumming.

As a young man I wasn't too interested in playing two and four. But as we get older, we start to understand that congruency is more important than articulating your drumming subplot underneath someone else's story. What I look for is an understanding of the song, a cogent understanding of the emotional destination of the song, an understanding of what the story is trying to articulate, and how I can create support underneath of that. For me, it gets more difficult the less I can play. My drumming has got to be compelling enough to carry the story. For us, the narrative reigns supreme. When we were making *Machina*, we talked a lot about Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hart. We talked about songs like "Night and Day" and "De-Lovely." In those songs when the lyrics would stop that was the end of the bar, then the next bar would start. We wondered, why do we have to wait? If the story is going to pause, obviously you pause. But we had these songs that felt very unwound, the last part of our writing process would be to (kind of) screw in the ends of the phrases and wind them tight so there wasn't there wasn't a lot of excess playing that was going to deviate from the from the story. You can hear that on songs like "Muzzle" and "I of the Mourning." If you listen to those

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arrangements, they're wound very tight. There's lots of bar cuts when the vocals end. That was really all born of listening to Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, and show tune arrangements.

Billy and I both listen to a lot of music. I just sent him a Bill Evans interview, I've always been a huge Bill Evans fan. The first record I heard was *Symbiosis* with (drummer) Marty Morell and the orchestra. Then I went back to Paul Motian, Larry Bunker, and Joe LaBarbera. I've listened to that stuff for hours and hours, Bill's music really tells you what you need to know about how much is enough. There are so many lessons to be learned from listening to that stuff. For instance, I never really understood free jazz, as a drummer I tried to get into it, but I never had a guiding light. But through Bill Evans and knowing about Paul Motian I watched the Keith Jarrett, Charlie Haden, Paul Motian video from 1972, that's when I got it. Nobody could play like Paul Motian, I remember reading an interview with Paul and he talked about loving to play with Bill Evans but hating to play so quietly. Obviously, Motian's calling was somewhere else, and he went on to change the face of how everybody listens to, plays, and interprets music. Bill Evans and Paul Motian have been, and continue to be, a huge part of my musical education.

MD: You mentioned Bobby Caldwell from the band Captain Beyond, no one *EVER* mentions him.

JC: My brother is a drummer. He turned me on to Captain Beyond. Caldwell's playing immediately spoke to me. That remains some of my most referenced rock music. If you listen to *Gish*, you'll hear pretty much every fill from the songs on that first Captain Beyond record. Caldwell, much like Mitch Mitchell, Michael Shrieve, and a few others brought a jazz sensibility to rock music that made the drumming much more interesting to me.

When I joined the Pumpkins, they were really into bands like Joy Division and Love and Rockets. I had heard of those bands, but that music didn't have much to do with where I was as a drummer at the time. I'm a huge fan of those bands now because I developed a reverse understanding of what they meant to Billy as a songwriter. I felt like it was incumbent upon me to go and figure out what was compelling about that music. As I got older, I realized that it was their identity and their voice that was so attractive to fans. I also realized that when I listen to instrumentalists, the identity is what is attractive to me.

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MD: You want to hear their voice.

JC: Yes. To be identifiable within a context of self-expression in a way that allows one to be themselves.

MD: What other records really set you on your drumming path?

JC: Jeff Beck's *Blow by Blow* with Richard Bailey, and Jeff Beck's *Wired* with Narada Michael Walden. Richard Bailey's playing on *Blow by Blow* is where I learned to play time with eighth notes on the hi-hat with my left foot. Those records were really all you needed to know about that type of playing. Then I found out about Tony through the second Lifetime band with Holdsworth. I did my reverse engineering and went all the way back through his playing with Miles to Herbie Hancock's "One Finger Snap." Through Tony I got really into Elvin, Blakey, and Philly Joe. To a lot of people, jazz all sounds very similar. But when you listen to those guys play and the way they articulate their right hand on the ride cymbal you can hear that it's a very personal statement.

MD: The ride cymbal is the jazz drummer's thumbprint.

JC: RIGHT! The differences between Elvin, Philly, and Art's ride cymbal beat are remarkable! The spacing of the notes, it's like it's etched in stone. I have talked to Erskine about this stuff. I take lessons from drummer Steve Lyman. He studied with Ari Hoenig and Bill Stewart (another one of my all-time favorite drummers) Steve came over one day and he ran through all the different ride cymbal patterns. He went from Philly Joe to Art Blakey to Roy Haynes, and many others. it was remarkable how different the patterns were.

MD: What type of stuff are you studying with Steve?

JC: Independence stuff, right now we are working on the first five exercises in *Stick Control* and breaking them into quarter note triplets and swung eighths underneath the ride cymbal. I've been working on that stuff for over a year. When I knew I was going to play with Frank Catalano, I spent a good amount of time on my right hand, not just the speed, but what I was gonna say.

MD: Your thumbprint.

JC: Yup, like I said, my brother's a drummer too, when he finally came to see me play with the quartet he said, "Your right-hand sounds really good, how long how long you been working on that?" I said, "Two years!"

MD: How did you digest and learn the music from three new records (*Atum* is a three CD set) to play them live? Are you playing all of the new music live?

JC: No. When we when we play live, we do just an assortment of the entire timeline, we really look at live sets like we look at albums. We try to look at them holistically and we don't really get caught up in like oh we don't have a song from this album… We try to just paint a picture and try to create a narrative. We try to bring people up, bring them down, take them up, take them over here, etc. Night to night things will change, Billy will stretch out a solo, we do that solo on "Silverfuck" where he and I solo kind of free in the middle of it. Some nights that solo will be you know three or four minutes long, other nights we'll compress it a little bit. We leave room for the audience to go with us. We try to take all that stuff into consideration when we're developing sets.

MD: You have mentioned a few of your older records, let's run them down, and give me some insight to each one? I had a long talk with Butch Vig about *Gish*, and I always heard Taylor Hawkins talking about *Gish*, you probably know how much he loved that record. *Gish* is one of the modern rock drumming touchstones. Talk to me about *Gish* and making that record.

JC: That was just where I was as a drummer at the time. The band was playing a lot. We were playing every day, either rehearsing or playing gigs. None of us had any money, we had a crappy rehearsal space, none of us were out on the scene hanging out at bars. All we did was play. So when we showed up to do *Gish*, we did the drums in two days. Some of that stuff was actually just one take. We were just greased up and ready to go! Butch loved that stuff. We showed up and he was like *whoa what's going on here? These guys can really play, this is gonna be great!* We had a great time; I consider Butch to be a family member. He's a great guy and he's been a huge part of my development. Butch taught me to how to continue to be myself within an architecture that had a chance to create contemporary hits. Even with songs like "Today" or "Cherub Rock" there's a lot of crazy drumming going on and we managed to make it sound like a pop song. That was really because of Butch's tutelage.

MD: Did you ever cross paths with Siggi from the Sugarcubes? He was working with Butch a lot back then and doing sessions in Chicago. I just interviewed him for MD, because (as it turns out) he made a record with Peter Erskine.

JC: Siggi was such a good drummer, he was fantastic. When I when I started to hear the type of music the Sugarcubes were playing, a light bulb went off in my head. Songs like "Birthday" and those early Sugarcubes songs— The Sugarcubes and The Smiths had allowed me to hear a different way to conceptualize drums. Those parts were very articulate, very confident, and the drum parts were produced in a way that a lot of bands weren't producing drums. Siggi is an incredible drummer, he had an incredible delicacy and incredible feels, his stuff is really identifiable.

I have been a fan of Peter Erskine for years. Today, I'm incredibly fortunate to call him a friend. I was such a huge Weather Report fan, I loved them early on, especially the incarnation with Alex Acuna (those were the records I had at the time). I remember the first time I got an email from Peter; I think I showed it to everybody I knew. For me, Grammy awards and that stuff was "cool," and obviously an honor but that wasn't the

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biggest thing that ever happened to me. The biggest thing that ever happened to me was being on the cover of *Modern Drummer* and eventually getting to know all the people I grew up reading about and listening to. I met Roy Haynes and all the guys that were with Yamaha back then: Dave Weckl, JR Robinson, Vinnie, Steve Jordan. I just couldn't believe this was my new drum universe! Like all young drummers from that era, I sat on my bed and read those magazines over and over again and looked at the pictures and dreamt about "What if?" I feel like that dreaming was a big part of my, and everyone else's success.

MD: Between *Gish* and *Siamese Dream* did you intentionally reign in your drumming a bit? Your drumming seemed to get more orchestral and organized on *Siamese Dream*. How did you evolve between those two records, and how did you react to that music differently?

JC: Again, I just let the songs be my guide. When the music for *Gish* was created it was really about the drums. The drums were creating the transitions, the drums were creating choruses, the syncopation between the guitar and the drums was really the identifying principle of that record. That record was all about filling up space and in a very Bobby Caldwell way. There were a lot of single stroke rolls, a lot of flams, a lot of Tony-isms. As Billy became a different type of songwriter, he started delivering songs like "Cherub Rock" and "Mayonnaise," so obviously whether you acknowledge it or not, you're getting a different message and you're hearing songs that require a different type of drumming and a slightly augmented version of yourself. That's where Butch was really helpful. I was already a pretty dynamic player. Butch helped me focus on parts and signature motifs as opposed to what I was doing on *Gish*.

In regard to dynamics - When I was a teenager I played polkas, so I was used to playing really quiet. I played on a polka television show when I was 15 and a polka radio show when I was 16. You had to play super quiet when you played that polka beat. And the polka beat was basically just a really fast swing jazz beat. I played the International Polka festival with a guy named Ed Karosa who was considered the "Prince of Polka." When I played with him, his wife (Irene) would come and really light you up if you played too loud.

MD: I'm laughing because I just interviewed John Sparrow from the Violent Femmes, and we spent a lot of time talking about his polka background, and now you bring up your polka background…

JC: That doesn't surprise me. I know John, great drummer, great guy. On *Siamese Dream*, we were continuing to represent ourselves albeit somewhat more subtly. It all became about the dynamics and motifs. We still did stuff like "Geek USA" which just cut me loose. Songs like "Silverfuck" allowed me to stretch out and write unconventional parts. That beat, for instance, is a single stroke roll between my left hand and my right foot, which was inspired by some of the Alan Dawson stuff. But on songs like "Today" you're not going to be playing a whole lot of drums in the middle of that. The song was already so developed, and the construction of the song is so intact that it didn't really need a lot. Sometimes the first question I'll ask Billy when he brings in a new song on acoustic guitar is, "Does it even need drums?" I try not to have an ego attached to this stuff because I feel like once you get into "it's about me" you stop being a musician and you start being something apart from the story. You start being a protagonist as opposed to a participant. I learned that stuff from listening to Larry Bunker play with Bill Evans. Some of my favorite stuff with Bill is the Larry Bunker stuff. Larry Bunker was a great percussionist, but his brushwork is next level. Talk about a guy that had incredible sensitivity on the kit. That Larry Bunker, Chuck Israels, Bill Evans Trio is some of my favorite stuff, I listen to it all the time. The *Trio 64* record is so good! For me, the challenge is to be a participant in the music without having an agenda other than to serve the music.

MD: I interviewed Vinnie years ago, and he said that one of the hardest things to do was to tell an artist and a producer that he wasn't hearing any drums on a specific track.

JC: Our FIRST job is to determine whether a song needs our services or not. We've all had our toilets worked on (or whatever) and we've hired the guy who comes in and fixes something. Then we find out later that it really didn't need to be fixed. That's a dishonorable thing. Being dishonorable in the trades is one thing. But as a musician we can't afford to be dishonorable because it comes back to haunt us. As we mature as instrumentalists and in our supporting roles, we'll eventually go back and listen to that stuff and realize that maybe we were out of bounds and being selfish.

MD: As you look back, how did your (or the band's) approach changes between *Siamese Dream* and *Mellon Collie*? Compositionally they sound similar, did you approach them both in the same way?

JC: The difference was with *Siamese Dream* we had a finite number of songs. We identified the parameters between "Geek USA" and "Luna" and the songs where I played brush stuff. We identified that we were going to live in the middle of these two those two brackets on *Mellon Collie*. Those brackets were blown away by songs like "Cupid de Locke" where I was playing a can of hairspray, an aspirin bottle, and some rusty scissors. Then there were songs like "Jellybelly" which was an intense drum ride. I would say it was a little easier on *Mellon Collie* because we knew we were covered with songs like "Tonight, Tonight," "Bullet with Butterfly Wings," and "Thirty-Three." We were covered because we knew we had six or seven songs that could be big radio singles, that left us a lot of latitude to go wide on the other stuff.

That's also when (producer) Flood came in and started producing the band. When Billy started talking about using Flood on the record, the only thing I knew about Flood was Depeche Mode, Nine Inch Nails and stuff that didn't have a lot of drumming on it. Part of me was wondering *what's this exercise going to be?* Then here comes Flood and he just wanted to record the band live. He said, "I want you guys to do what you do, we're going to make a record and encapsulate the energy of the band live, we're going to make this record a celebration of all the work you've done." The gloves were off at that point. I learned so much on that record. Flood challenged me to be many more things than I was. I would show up on some days and all the cymbals would be gone from my drum kit. Flood would say let's play this song with no cymbals because I wanna get down to what you like about what you're doing. There were times where snare drums would be missing, all sorts of stuff.

When we worked with him on *Machina*, he would ask how many different ways we could play a song? We would play the same song as a slow blues, a three-two clave, and a samba. We stripped songs down until we got to like what it was that we wanted. He asked why a song had to have backbeats on two and four? Why can't it be a in 6/8? It was so nice to have a producer give you a platform to be a drummer and to really explore time signatures, tempo, and different meters. Those are the things that we all think about, but we don't generally talk about them with other musicians. So to have Flood come in and say, "I want to know what this song sounds like in your brain when you're sitting at home drumming on a table. How do we get that on this record? Those questions could potentially make songs way better than they are, and a lot of times they did. On the *Machina* sessions there was a song called "Blue Skies Bring Tears" where we did many different permutations of the same song. At one point Flood kept me up till 4:00 in the morning because he wanted me to record it while I was really tired.

MD: You have had the pleasure of working with some of modern rock's greatest producers, who picks the producer for each record?

JC: Well, Billy's the guy who worked in the record store early on in the band. He sat in this massive record store by himself all day long while three or four people would trickle in from time to time. While he worked, he just listened and listened and listened! He knew who all the producers were, and he knew who was producing what. He would ferret these guys out and figure out who was going to be the best choice for the songs that he had in his head, then he would run it by the band. Billy's really good at visualizing completion because (obviously) he has more information than any of us. He has the finished product already in his head, so it makes sense for him to pick the producers. Billy said that when he heard Butch's bass drum sound at Smart Studio on the Killdozer record, he knew that Butch would be right for what we were doing and right for my

Corrine Luxon

type of drumming.

MD: Who produced *Atum*?

JC: Billy did. As the songwriter he makes the final call. Of course he leans on me to create the drum sound but his is the most complete vision of the song so it makes sense to allow him to guide the process. We all have our own studios now so we are all adept at recording. These days we work almost exclusively with Howard Willing who's title is co-producer-engineer. Howard is very instrumental, he has a very pop mindset so he's valuable in in terms of not letting us go too far off the deep end. He's the voice of reason and the adult in the room.

I actually just got done recording all the drum tracks with him for the next record, I was at Blackbird studios for the last nine days, we were writing and arranging all the music for the next record. The next one is more of a two guitars bass and drums record. We wanted to go back and make a guitar record using the information that we have learned from the last two records. Now that we know what the stripped-down version of the band sounds like, how can that inform the process if we go back to the foundation. It's been a lot of fun and we have a great time in the studio. When Billy and I are in the studio anything goes. We both have learned so much from Flood, Roy Thomas Baker, and Butch Vig. We like to go all the way for a song, then come in the next day and strip it all the way down, or even get rid of everything and start over. That part of it is so fun for us, and we learned how to do that through working with all those great producers.

MD: You have said that you experiment with the time feels and tempos a lot when you're recording, how do you go about finding the perfect tempo for a song?

JC: In the old days when we always had a band to work with, we would play a song every day until it felt right. We would listen back and hear that words were getting too bunched up, or something isn't articulating properly. Up until *Cyr* we never worked with click tracks, we recorded drums straight to tape with no click just live takes. It used to drive me nuts because songs would speed up and slow down and sometimes tempos would be all over the place, but Flood loved the energy and was more concerned with the performance than the way something looked on a screen. For tempos with us, it's just a matter of listening, and it becomes obvious within two or three BPM. We record everything to a click now, I love it. It's so much easier and if it feels right, it feels right. Again, we're both big jazz guys so we've all heard Bill Evans play "Nardis" at 80,000

different tempos, which is the best one?

MD: How editable are you as a drummer when you are recording in Pro Tools?

JC: Everything can be edited. But Corgan likes my swing, so he leaves it in there. Obviously if we have something that's got a sequencer in it, we'll grid out the drums, I try not to have an ego attached to this stuff, I'm not like *oh my God don't grid out my drums,* I don't really care. I look at it like this way, if The Beatles had Pro Tools they would have used it. It's just another tool, so I don't care. On *Cyr*, Billy left my swinging pocket over the sequenced stuff because he feels like my chug and the ebb and flow is part of the band.

That said, the technology can sometimes drive us nuts, at our core we are analog guys. All of the older records were straight to tape with no click. We got good enough to where we could edit between takes without a click. We were working on the song "Stars" that had a little drum solo in it. We liked the front half of one take and the back half of another take. So Billy says, "We'll just edit them together." And the engineer said that because you guys didn't play it to a click, it might be tough. We put up 10 takes of the song and they were all within two seconds of each other in length. The files looked exactly the same because the tempo was right. If all the Pro Tools files look identical that's when you're playing the song the way it should be played. People forget that you were able to edit without Pro Tools back in the day. I just know that when I walk down the street, I'm not quantized. I'm more into inconsistencies in playing than I am into playing. It's the mistakes that define us. I want to hear more mistakes in music.

MD: The greatest Tony Williams quote ever was when he said to me, "I don't like musicians who don't make mistakes—they're not trying hard enough."

JC: That's true, you gotta be taking chances and making mistakes. Music shouldn't be about fear and calculus, it should be about self-expression and the celebration of the inconsistencies of the human condition. We all have them, it's what unites us. It's what allows us to be human and be OK with being human. We must start to let people off the hook for being human. I think the more you get into quantization and reworking the human condition, (in whatever kind of architecture you're trying to rework,) the further away you get from being a real human. Like I said before, you know a drum part is right when you're supporting the narrative. Supporting the narrative of life is about allowing mistakes to happen.

For example, I live in the forest, and I see trees that grow straight up and then something gets in their way. So they start to grow sideways. Is that a mistake? No. There are still birds nesting in that tree, it still drops nuts on the ground, and it's still a beautiful creature. But it had to adjust at some point, just like we all have to adjust to suit the environment that's been provided for us.

I know it's a deep conversation. But when it comes to music and drums, sometimes music dictates things that are uncomfortable for us. I try not to have any ego attached to those instances. The universe has my back if I allow it. I'm 58 now, I've been playing since I was eight.

Max Fairclough

My relationship with my instrument is the oldest intact relationship that I have. My covenant with the drums is the barometer for everything that goes on in my life. My dedication to my instrument is a reflecting pool of how I feel about everything else in my life. That relationship comes first. Getting past the ego. To me, being a drummer is what you're doing *now*. How are you practicing? How are you moving things forward? How are you learning as a listener? How are you learning as a player? How are you learning as a human being? Drums are not something that "you get." You just work on it and keep working. You never "get it." You're always practicing, you're always trying to be better. For me, drums are (very much) a metaphor for life.

MD: I couldn't agree more. Drums is life, life is drums is more than just a metaphor for me.

JC: I'll tell you a funny story. My 20-year-old daughter is studying to be a playwright in college. She is a great old soul, and very much a music fan. When she was little, we bought her a record player when she was about seven years old. She used to go down and pick five records out of my collection just based on the covers. You could walk by her room, and she'd be playing *Future Shock* by Curtis Mayfield, or Earth, Wind, & Fire, Bowie, or Carole King. She liked Carole King because she had the cat on the piano. Later in life, when she got an iPhone, and listened to MP3's on AirPods, that music became the soundtrack for some other digital experience she was having. But what was interesting was when she played her record player, she would sit on the bed and look at the cover and have this analog exchange. When she dropped the needle on vinyl, she sat there and looked at the record cover and read the liner notes for the millionth time.

> Drums are not something that "you get." You just work on it and keep working. You never "get it."

That's kind of how I feel about the amount of mind share that music of today has versus the amount of mind share that it had before. As recording artists we're all competing for the same bandwidth, but the experience, and how we compose and record music has changed. We weren't looking at our cellphones between takes when we recorded the classic Pumpkins records. We weren't reading social media feeds on our breaks. We were talking about music. Could those records be made today? Who knows, but I know that the amount of time that we spent thinking about music was much greater.

MD: When I am playing, I always relate the pacing of a tune to gears of a car (first gear, second gear…) How do you and Billy conceptualize the idea of pacing a tune?

Jimmy Chamberlin's 2023 Set-Up

Compiled by Vic Salazar

Drums:

Yamaha Absolute Hybrid Maple (except snares) custom airbrushed by Chicago-based visual artist Jason Brammer.

A. 5.5x14 Dunnett Classic Titanium snare in Raw finish w/ George Way Double Edge-Double Flange 2.3mm steel hoops

B. 4x14 Ludwig Supralite auxiliary snare

C. 7x8 tom

D. 12x14 tom

D. 7x10 tom

E. 8x12 tom

F. 15x16 floor tom

G. 7x8 tom

H. 16x18 floor tom

I. 7x10 tom

J. 14×22 bass drum

K. 14x18 bass drum (remote)

Cymbals:

Istanbul Agop

1. 14" Epoch Hi-Hats
2. 8" Traditional Splash (on aux snare top, secured w/ Remo Dave Weckl Active Snare Dampening System
3. 11"/13"/15" Clap Stack
4. 12" Traditional Splash
5. 20" Traditional Swish with 6 rivets
6. 8" Traditional Mini China stacked on 10" Traditional Trash Hit
7. 15" Traditional Paper-Thin Crash
8. 18" Traditional Paper-Thin Crash
9. 10" Traditional Splash
10. 20" Epoch Crash (used as ride)
11. 14" 30th Anniversary Hi-Hats (reversed with top on bottom/ bottom on top)
12. 18" Xist ION Crash
13. 10" Xist Brilliant Mini China stacked on 12" Traditional Trash Hit
14. 8" Traditional Bell over 20" Xist Power China stacked on 22" Traditional Trash Hit
15. 12" Xist Brilliant Mini China stacked on 14" Traditional Trash Hit
16. 20" Xist ION crash
17. 26" Gong
18. 7" closed mini hi-hats (mounted off 22" kick) comprised of Turk Splash (top) and Turk Bell (bottom)

Percussion:

aa. Roland SPD: ONE Electro Pad

bb. Remo Spoxe Hi-Hats comprised of 13.5" over 11.5"

cc. Roland SPD: ONE Kick Pad

dd. Latin Percussion "Vic Salazar" Signature Rock Cowbell

Sticks:

All Vic Firth including Modern Jazz MJC4 Maple Sticks, T1 General Timpani Mallets, Heritage Brushes, Steve Smith Signature TW12 Birch Tala Wands.

Drumheads:

All Remo including Coated Emperors on snare and tom batters, Ambassador Hazy on snare sides, Ebony Ambassadors on tom resonant sides, Clear Ambassador with External Sub Muff'l Bass Drum System and Falam Slam Double Patch on 22" bass batter, Coated Powerstroke 3 on 18" bass batter, Custom Graphics Ambassadors on bass resonant sides.

Hardware:

All Yamaha except for Drum Workshop 9002 double pedals, two 9502LB remote cable hi-hats, and 9212 closed hat.

Accessories:

Humes & Berg Enduro Pro Cases, Kelly SHU FLATZ Kick Drum Mic System, Remo Crown Control Gels, Gorilla Snot Drumstick Grip Enhancer, JH Audio Roxanne In-Ear Monitors, Shure Wireless Bodypack, RoboCup Drink Holder, and Tama Accessory Tray.

JC: We approach it very similarly. We might think in terms of brightness and darkness sometimes. I'm an amateur race car driver so I think about gears a lot. Down shifting, up shifting, apexing, those types of things. It's just about the dynamic process and where we are within the dynamic. Do we need the end of this song to lift? If we're already up, how is that lifting mechanism going to happen? We're going to have to downshift from 4th to 2nd gear at some point to slow the car down, brake for the corner and then gas it down the straight-away for the finish line. There are lots of metaphors.

It's all about dynamics. It's similar to this conversation. Our conversation has had many ups and downs, our conversational flow has had many dynamics. You must determine what the road looks like, do I need to be in fifth gear the whole time, or do I need to be at a crawl most of the song. Every song, every conversation, every show— has a different dynamic.

Music shouldn't be about fear and calculus, it should be about self-expression and the celebration of the inconsistencies of the human condition.

MD: I didn't know you raced cars too. If we put Simon Phillips, Dave Weckl, and yourself on a track, who's going to win?

JC: That's a good question. I think everyone wins on their home track. I'm racing next month at a Road America event, I love it. It's very meditative.

Dave is a good example of somebody who came out of the gate in fifth gear. We all used to do Yamaha Groove Night together at NAMM shows. We would all play: Dave, Steve Jordan, Mickey Curry, JR Robinson, Peter Erskine, Jabo and Clyde, and many other greats. Dave was always mind blowing, but incredibly, his playing in the last six or seven years has gone to completely another level. His playing now has an incredibly ferocious pocket. He's reinvented his posture and stance on the drums. IMO He's coming from a new standpoint of sensitivity and articulation, but that is combined with the huge wallop of his groove. It's inspiring to see a guy who's that good get even better, not by practicing more chops, but by just adjusting his musical vantage point in a way that it's so much heavier.

There is a lot of people out there who are really advancing the instrument. Nate Wood is a good friend of mine and he's really advancing the instrument, but there are also guys that have been advancing forever like Dave. Terry Bozzio is another friend of mine who is always advancing. I did a big clinic tour with Terry, Gregg Bissonette, Kenny Aronoff, and Thomas Lang. I was relatively green at the time and I always felt like the odd man out when it came to clinics, but one night Thomas Lang handed out a piece of sheet music with a simple groove on it and we all played it. His point was to listen to how different everybody sounds, and realize that more than anything, that's why we're all here. That's the qualitative part of drumming, it's our ability to be ourselves on our instrument that allows people to see the vulnerability and the playing.

MD: Are there going to be more Jimmy Chamberlin Complex records?

JC: Yes, I'll be doing them for the rest of my life. I just talked to (bassist) Billy Mohler, Frank and I are going to go out to LA to do a gig. We're going to write some new music, but I think Alan Pasqua is going to be involved, so the gig will be with Alan Pasqua, Frank Catalano, Billy Mohler, and we may bring Shane Endsley in to play some trumpet. But The Complex is still a living breathing thing, it's just that everybody has kids now. It's harder to get everybody together than when we were all single and we could just get in the van and go play all the time. It's definitely evolving.

I think the next proper record we do is going to be a kind of metal based. I've been listening to this video game metal soundtrack called *Guilty Gear* that my daughter turned me on to. It's written by this South African guy named Daisuke Ishiwatari, it has these incredible drums that are almost impossible to play, but it's really fun music. We're looking to play some of that stuff. We've already done a fusion Brand X-esque record, and we did the straight ahead record with Chris Speed and Randy Ingram, now I want to do something that's a little bit more metal. I want to do that just to go out of our wheelhouse and out of our comfort zone. We're all gonna have to sweat a little bit.

MD: Maybe you make some really cool mistakes.

JC: I hope so.

MD: In the last few years it doesn't look like your Yamaha drums have changed much (aside from the cool artwork on them,) but your cymbal sound has changed. What can you tell me about your new cymbals sound and your new relationship with Istanbul Agop?

JC: I struggled for a bit with what I was hearing in my head and what I was able to replicate on my kit. I was a Zildjian guy for many years and I loved the Constantinople's when they came out, I heard the prototypes and got very excited about the potentiate of having cymbals that were dark and Turkish sounding. When the first Chick Corea Trio record came out, I emailed Brian Blade and asked him about his fantastic dark ride cymbal sound on that record. *That* was the sound that I was hearing in my head. He told me it was a 50s 24" K. I could tell that my tastes were changing, but I wasn't able to find that sound. I talked to Nate Wood, and he hooked me up with Scott Liken from Istanbul Agop. I was doing a Complex session and Nate dropped off his cymbals and I was like oh my God!!! The Istanbul Agop's allowed me to bring my baseline dynamic way down, it allowed me to create a tapestry with the cymbals as the foundation of my sound. I'm back to using a 20" ride cymbal, I sneak some rivets in it every once in a while. The dark beauty of those cymbals and the quickness of them really spoke to me. I feel like I finally have the sound that I'm hearing in my head, Now I can crash on my ride, I can create a washy undercurrent, or I can get a very good articulate feel with definition. It's all there. One of the greatest things that's happened, is that those cymbals have allowed me to play quieter. I use Vic Firth Modern Jazz MJ4 sticks which are Maple, and they really allow the darkness to come through because the grain structure of the stick is not like Hickory. It doesn't create that kind of ping. The wash those sticks create comes from the grain structure of the Maple. Now I hear the ping and the wash all at one time. Depending on my dynamic, I can get more or less of each depending on my stick angle. I'm a Jim Gordon fanatic, and I always thought the ride sound on "Low Spark of High Heeled Boys" was what a ride cymbal should sound like. When you hear Blakey or Elvin, they've always had the dark wash going on and the articulation was on top of it. Then rock came in and everything had to cut through, that drove me nuts. These Istanbul Agop cymbals allow me to be a jazz drummer in a rock context every night.

MD: Are you a snare drum guy?

JC: Oh yeah. I have also started to use Ronn Dunnett's snare drums. I did my own signature snare with Yamaha, but it was more of a Black Beauty rip-off. When Hagi and I made that drum, I actually picked that shell out of a dumpster. I was trying to get something thin that would move like a Supraphonic or a Black Beauty and allow me a different menu of notes. I was looking for inconsistency, but Yamaha (and Hagi) were really about the opposite.

MD: Consistency.

JC: Yeah, but there's a billion different notes in a snare drum, I never play the same note twice, it drives people nuts. I play near the edge, I'm in the middle, I'm on the rim. In the context of 12 bars, I want to be able to play 12 different sounds with a snare drum. I'm dragging the stick across the drum, playing one handed buzz rolls, just making people crazy. But it's part of my inner groove, it's the way the way I keep time.

MD: Engineers must hate you.

JC: Yeah, sometimes, but I have to be able to sound like myself, or I'm doing a different job. One that I never applied for. Ronn's snares were a game changer. He's making thin titanium shells and the snare beds are a little bit deeper to allow the wires to sit on the bottom head in a in a way that makes the drum super buzzy and super articulate. It's the perfect drum if you if you like an articulate snare drum like the old Rogers Dynasonic.

MD: What size are you using?

JC: I'm always a 5 1/2 x 14 traditionalist guy, but Ronn gave me a 6 ½ x 14 and I just used it on this new record. Ronn came to a Pumpkins gig and gifted me his prototype titanium snare drum, and I played it that night! He thought it was crazy that I was going to switch snare drums in the middle of a tour, but I'm the drummer and if it sounds good to me, I'm gonna play it. One of the great things about the current Pumpkins tour, is that all the amps are in ISO cabinets, so the only "live" instrument on stage is the drums. We can lean heavily on the overheads and basically mic it like a jazz kit. I'm able to play like John Densmore up there and it all still comes through. It's so fun!

> There's a billion different notes in a snare drum, I never play the same note twice.

Corrine Luxon

As we as we all get older, we get more in touch with why we're doing what we're doing. I learned to play drums by listening and slowing records down, I listened and there was something emotionally compelling about what Elvin was doing. I learned it because I wanted to say the same thing, and I knew why I wanted to say it. There was something in the message that meant something to me. I would play things that Tony was doing backwards because I never *saw* Tony do it. I was after the emotional content of those things rather than the physical part of it. We all know the *how* and the *what* of drumming. We figure it out, practice it, and put it in our repertoire. But we don't talk a lot about the *why* of drumming. The understanding of *why* you're playing. It's a deeper journey and rooted in your own mysticism. If you're looking for somebody to tell you the answers, it's no further than your record player.

When people ask me what are the greatest moments in my drumming career? They're always expecting me to say playing at Madison Square Garden or something. But I say all of the great moments happened in my practice space. They happened in the morning when I was figuring stuff out and something clicked and became rooted. Those are the high points. That is when we get closer to the "why."

Check out Jimmy's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

Jonathan “Ginger” Hamilton

The Thrill of Expression

By Paolo Ragusa

It all started in a Southeast London church for Jonathan “Ginger” Hamilton. As a pastor’s kid, Jonathan grew up idolizing expressive gospel drummers, developing his chops at a young age, and working his way through the UK gospel scene. Of course, it didn’t stop there for Jonathan — having booked his first professional touring gig straight out of school, Hamilton nabbed tours and session work with numerous UK pop artists, including Jessie J, Lianne La Havas, and Westlife. Fast forward to 2023, when Jonathan has just embarked on another extensive world tour with Sam Smith. Early on in the tour, Hamilton is connecting with *Modern Drummer* to discuss his journey, the drummers that inspire him, Sam Smith’s new live show, and how he takes care of himself throughout such an extensive tour.

Madison Phipps

MD: Where did your journey with the drums begin?

JGH: It all began from a very, very young age. My parents told me that literally from about two or three years old, I always gravitated towards rhythm and to the drums. I grew up in church, so music — expressive music — and improvisation was a big part of my childhood and a big part of my life. My dad is a pastor. He's a bishop. So naturally, as a pastor's kid, I was at church all the time. It was a very heavy environment of music and expression. That was my training ground, so to speak, starting from four years old I'd be in church playing every week.

My grandmother (God rest her soul) had actually bought me my first kit when I was young (about three years old.) She bought me one of those Mickey Mouse toy kits and I went through that in about six months. As my skills progressed, my parents bought me a little red drum kit, miniature size. From then on, I just didn't look back.

I started catching attention from local praise and worship leaders at age 14. I got my first opportunity for my first paid gig from an artist called Noel Robinson. Once I realized that I could make money doing music, I knew what I wanted to do — I didn't look back from there. I just carried on with local gospel artists in the UK. At around the age of 17 or 18, I started meeting church musicians who were also working in the UK pop music industry. I got my first opportunity to do an audition at the age of 16 while I was still in school. Naturally, I didn't get the gig because I was too young.

I started to develop the appetite to want to do this professionally. I was 18 years old and just coming out of school. I auditioned with an artist called Vivi Brown and was told (again) that I was too young. My brother was in the band, and he put a good word in when the drummer couldn't make it. I was asked to fill in for the summer, and I ended up staying on that gig for about two years. That started my pop music journey. I've gone on to work with Peter Andre, Jessie J, N-Dubz, JLS, Westlife, Leona Lewis, and Lianne La Havas. Most recently, I've been fortunate enough to work with Sam Smith, which has been fantastic. Yeah, it's literally been a God-ordained career, God has kind of orchestrated it all for me — one thing has come and just fallen into another thing. It's been an amazing ride so far!

MD: This new Sam Smith tour is definitely their biggest yet. You've played on multiple Sam Smith tours before the latest Gloria recording as well. What has the musical journey been like with Sam?

JGH: I came in on the second album cycle with Sam and have really seen the journey musically. I wouldn't say it's gone full circle, but it's heading more towards how Sam started. When he came out with "Latch," it was more electronic, more upbeat, and more straight-ahead pop. So when I came in, it was more soulful and more organic. I was using bigger drums on my first setup, my toms went 12, 14, 16, 18. But this time, my drums are smaller, I've added more electronics and samples for a more direct, traditional pop sound.

MD: Walk me through some of those electronic components on the kit and how they're sounding on the new tour.

JGH: On this tour, we've gotten a lot more detailed in terms of electronics. We're running the Roland TD 50 and running a range of pads and triggers around the kit. I'm using six pads, I have my kick

David Phillips www.music-images.co.uk

drum triggered, all three of my snares are triggered, my floor tom and my gong floor tom triggered, and I have a separate e-kick as well for the songs that just require the electronic sound.

MD: As I can imagine, you and other pop drummers are playing these electronic beats a lot these days. Do you ever miss being able to do a full song with no triggers or samples like back in your church days?

JGH: Sometimes I do, actually. Especially when you're playing with triggers, you have to consider how the electronic sound moves. If you've got a big, boomy kick sound, you can't do too much in your feet. Or if you've got a fat snare drum sound, there's no use in doing 16th notes because it's just going to sound weird in the mix. So you've got to really concentrate when you've got these sounds on top of your drums. If you're going to do fills — if you're allowed to do fills in the setup that you're in — then the chops that you do, you've got to think about, and they have to fit the groove. It's a different mindset in terms of the free-form style where there's nothing on my drums, I can do what I want, I can add ghost notes and grace notes and whatnot. There are just things you can't do when you've got triggers on the drums. You just have to give it straight-ahead, meat and potatoes.

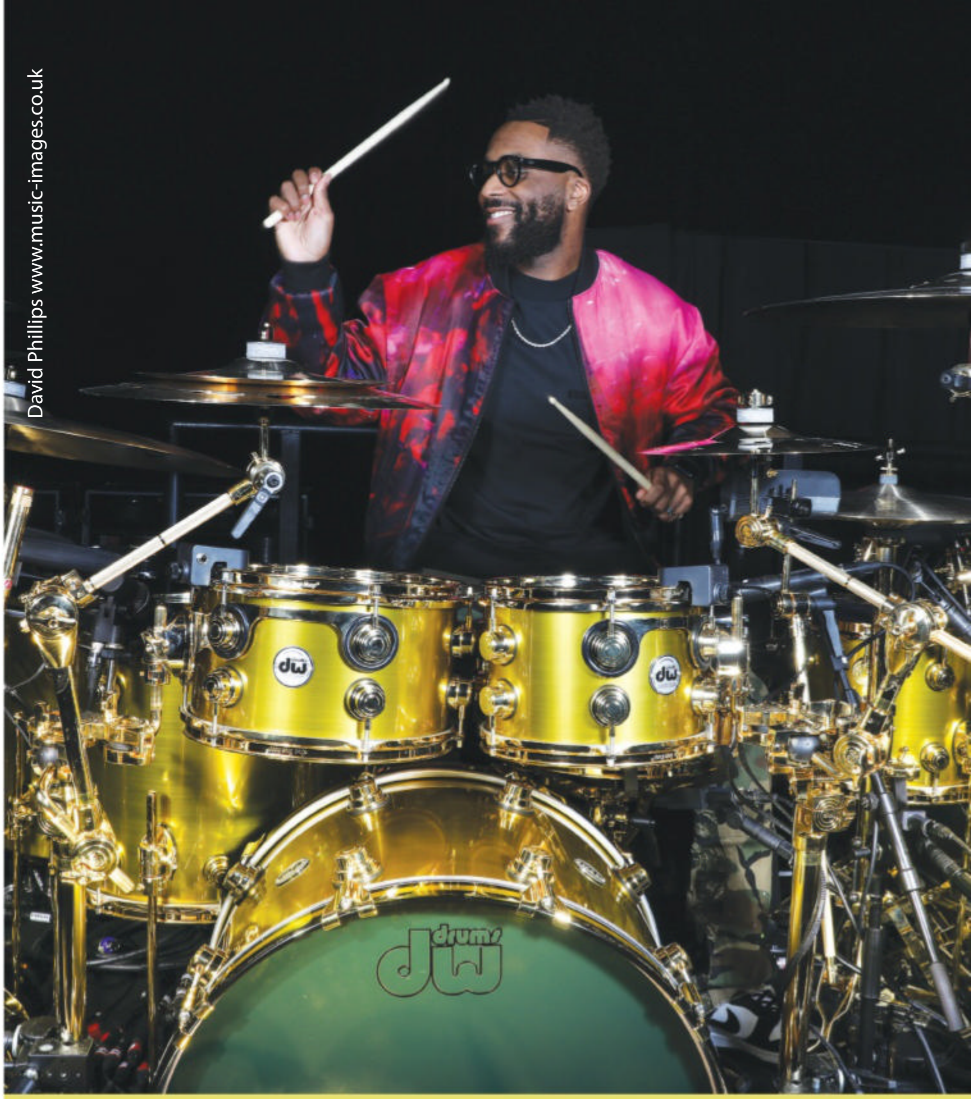
MD: Of course, like many drummers with backgrounds in gospel music, you still find moments to add your flourishes. When playing with Sam, do you still get that feeling of playing in church? Do you bring a little bit of that worship sound to your playing?

JGH: I mean, within reason. But yeah, on Sam's tour, I'm definitely given freedom to express myself and bring my own musical vocabulary to the table, so-to-speak. There are times where I can play out, especially on this tour and a lot more than the last tour, which is great. But when it just calls for the parts, then I lock into the parts and find joy in just locking in and making sure everything's nailed and as tight as possible.

MD: Who are some of your drumming influences, especially when you were just starting out?

JGH: That's a good question, and it's something I've been thinking about leading up to this interview. I really sat down and thought about my musical journey and what has inspired me. Obviously, growing up in church and being a pastor's kid, gospel was the only thing allowed in my house. So there was a lot of gospel music, particularly the New York gospel — it was a lot of Gerald Heyward, Jeff Leslie, and even Eddie Heyward, who doesn't get mentioned enough of my opinion. He was a heavy part of that early '90s New York gospel sound, especially playing on James Hall's CD when he was 11 or 12 at the time. When I was young, it inspired me to reach for excellence. When I started really consciously playing at like five or six, I knew that Eddie Heyward played on that CD at 11 years old, so I could do that in a few years. I also loved Tony Royster Jr. when I was young, he was in his early teens too. Seeing those young drummers actually made me reach for excellence a lot faster or try and reach for excellence a lot faster. They were a heavy part of my early influences. Obviously, Dennis Chambers, Vinnie, Steve Gadd, I started getting into them around 11 or 12. Then that I got more interested in the exhibition style of drumming and drum clinics, I was watching the Hudson Music videos, and stuff like that. When Aaron Spears came onto the scene, that was it for me. The way he phrased his chops at the time... it was just incredible. That blew my mind and literally made me even more obsessed with drums. Seeing him, and the way Brian Frasier-Moore, Lil' John Roberts, and Spanky were playing gigs and bringing themselves into these mainstream gigs... it was definitely inspiring.

Some of the UK drummers as well — Gerry Brown, Gareth Brown, Josh McKenzie... these guys were drummers



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On Sam's tour, I'm definitely given freedom to express myself and bring my own musical vocabulary to the table, so-to-speak.

> It's definitely an exciting time for UK musicians — to be able to showcase to the rest of the world our way of playing and what we bring to the table, our musical accent, and how we can showcase it.

that I could see in the UK doing their thing and really pushing to take pop music to the next level in the UK as well. There were also drummers that I grew up with as well — Dexter Hercules and Nathaniel Fuller. We would push each other. We got kicked out of buildings trying to set up drums and all the things you would do as a teenager to try and play drums. Those two in particular, they kept me on my toes when I was coming up. Whenever I'm in the UK, I'll call Dex, and that's the first thing we do. We set up drums, we talk, and we play, we hang out. It's still something we do now that we are into our thirties.

MD: Are there any newer drummers that are inspiring you today?

JGH: Well today, with Instagram, you have access to so much and so many drummers, it's amazing. There are great drummers doing pop gigs — Stix Taylor is killing it right now; I know he's played for Usher recently. Clemens Poindexter with Khalid, he's another one, and CJ Thompson has done Cardi B, Roddy Ricch, and now Charlie Puth. Then there's Mike Reid and Chris Johnson as well. But also, seeing a lot of remote recordings and the way things have changed in terms of offering remote recordings, there are drummers like Aaron Sterling that are really inspiring me at the moment. Also, Ash Soan, who I know from the UK, and Joe Clegg as well... what they're doing with pedal boards, adding effects and playing them live, that's the stuff I'm getting really into now.

MD: You come from London — South London specifically — and there's a lot of incredible music coming from the region right now. Where do you see yourself in that musical landscape, both as Sam Smith's drummer and independently?

JGH: Yeah, I think with music coming out of the UK, it's exciting again with the age of the internet. Music is so accessible worldwide now. There is there is an appetite for UK music by everyone else in the world. It's raised the standard of what everyone else is putting out, which is great — it's given us more eyes on a worldwide scale, like Sam is doing, like Adele was doing, like Ed Sheeran is doing. It's definitely an exciting time for UK musicians — to be able to showcase to the rest of the world our way of playing and what we bring to the table, our musical accent, and how we can showcase it.

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MD: Going back a bit to your background in both gospel and pop music, there's a fascinating intersection between the two — for many fans, massive pop shows become their church, and people congregate to worship their favorite artists. Do you feel that way at all when you're playing? Is it something that inspires you?

JGH: I'm definitely playing while knowing that my gift comes from God. That's a heavy part, if not the main source of my inspiration. That naturally comes out when I play. For me, every playing experience is somewhat of a spiritual experience. But I think we're bringing that into these arenas, yes, you can bring that inspiration. Of course, there are differences in terms of being conscious that this is entertainment as well, and that you're here to entertain the crowd. And you have to keep the crowd moving as the drummer, you have to keep their heads nodding. So that's the focal point. Literally, when I look out into the crowd and I see heads nodding, then I know I'm doing my job, I'm doing it well.

MD: Any advice for younger drummers, or drummers that are just starting out?

JGH: My advice is: don't be afraid to learn everything. Don't be afraid to find your own voice in terms of being a drummer. Obviously, there are lots of divisions and sub-divisions within genres, see where you can find freedom on the drums. In terms of how you play, I think drumming is limitless. In terms of learning, you can never stop learning, you can never master this instrument. It gives you something different every time you sit down. So, sit down a lot and play your drums and let them talk to you, let your drums inspire you. You can figure things out and find a voice that will literally change the world on drums. When I play, when I see how people react to my playing, and how it could change someone's day; something that I do on drums can literally change the way someone feels. I can play a drum beat and it can put a smile on someone's face... that is amazing to me. Being able to do that on drums, and I think for young drummers, obviously, there's an appetite for chops and all of that. Which is fine, I think that is great, and I still want to keep my chops up and be able to do all that stuff. But being able to play songs and play them a high level is something that is still very, very, very important. Always remember, that song can literally take you from just being a good drummer to being a great musician. It's good for young drummers to know that we are musicians as well.

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In terms of learning, you can never stop learning, you can never master this instrument. It gives you something different every time you sit down. So, sit down a lot and play your drums and let them talk to you, let your drums inspire you. You can figure things out and find a voice that will literally change the world on drums.

MD: Lastly, this is a really extensive world tour that you've just begun with Sam Smith. On these big tours, how do you maintain your sense of peace and take care of yourself?

JGH: That's a good question, and it's something that's very poignant, especially in this day and age with mental health being at the forefront of everyone's mind now, when it should have been obviously years ago. This world can consume you, it's very high stress and there's a high level of demand to be excellent at all times, especially in pop music. If there were 30 hours in a day, every production manager or Musical Director would use all 30, there's never enough time in a day in certain situations. It's a high intensity, high stress-level job, so just being able to switch off when you can and take time for yourself really matters. I like to stay prayed up and rest as much as I can. I'm trying to treat my body more like an athlete. So that's prep before the tour, working out before the tour, trying to prep my body to handle the load — there are a lot of rehearsals before the start of a tour.

Recovery and maintenance are important, especially with a lot of dates. So, I'm making sure I'm icing my forearms after the shows, doing the necessary things to wind down, just creating a routine of relaxing and calming down after the show... that can help with your mental state as well. So yeah, there're so many things that you can do. Whatever you like to do as a person, you can add that into your touring life. I like to play football, (soccer.) So I'm going to be doing that on days off when I can, as safely as I can. So yeah, just working out again, getting cardio, being outside, getting some sun when you can and stuff like that... it's good to be as balanced as you can as well. Which is hard with traveling and being in certain cities for only a couple of days, you find your bearings and then you have to leave. But if you can be as balanced as you can, it will help not in terms of not being so well on the road.

Check out Jonathan's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

Vince Wilburn Jr. and M.E.B.

Going to Miles Davis University

By Mark Griffith

Richie Porter

For everyone who might not know, Vince Wilburn Jr. is Miles Davis' nephew and he recorded and toured with Miles for several years. He played drums on the recordings *Man with the Horn, You're Under Arrest,* the new box set *That's What Happened 1982-1985*, and the DVD *Live in Montreal*. Wilburn's new recording project is the band M.E.B. (Miles Electric Band) and their new record is called *That You Not Dare To Forget*. Wilburn also works with Sony Legacy Recordings on the Miles Davis reissue series and is one of the family members who manages the Miles Davis estate. On top of all of that, Vince Wilburn Jr. is a wonderful drummer with a deep pocket and a very musical approach. At the time of this interview, Vince had just done a gig with M.E.B. at SF Jazz in honor of Miles Davis' birthday. Vince was excited to talk about his new project, drumming, his musical life with "Uncle Miles," and graduating from "Miles Davis University."

MD: I have an unrelated question to start. Are you also related to (one time) Weather Report drummer Ishmael Wilburn?

VW: No, but people do ask that.

MD: The new record is really cool and very diverse. I know the inspiration behind it, (it's in the title,) but what was the genesis of this project?

VW: This came about from a *Bitches Brew* celebration in 2010. We had the idea to put a band together to celebrate the anniversary of *Bitches Brew*. I called some of the other guys who had played with Miles, or just have a strong admiration and love for him, to get everything started. First, I called Wallace Roney, Darryl Jones and Robert Irving. I called Munyungo Jackson, Deron Johnson, Blackbird McKnight and Antoine Roney. We all rehearsed a couple of times and then did a gig at Sunset Junction in Silver Lake, California. The nucleus of that band was Darryl, Robert Irving, and me. As we started touring, we would call various trumpet players like Jeremy Pelt, Nicholas Payton, and Etienne Charles. We called it the Miles Electric Band. We were interpreting the music of the electric period of Miles in our own way. We started to work on new material, but some of the core members were unavailable due to other projects.

One day Lenny White and I were talking… he's a forward thinker, he thinks outside the box. I said Len we should listen to some of The Chief's (Miles Davis') catalog and come up with a concept for a record. Lenny and I looked at some YouTube videos of the band and some other live videos. After a few days, he called me and sent me some tracks. Lenny is like a movie director; he always sees how things are going to fit together. After he started sending these tracks, we both decided who to choose for different tracks and started making calls. Included on two of the tracks were Miles' original trumpet parts. One is featured on "Hail to the Real Chief" which was the first single and the other is on the song "Bitches are Back." The title track of the record is called "That You Not Dare To Forget," it's a ballad and we wanted the legendary Cicely Tyson (Miles' ex-wife) to do a spoken word part. She loved the track, but we couldn't work out the logistics. She unfortunately passed away. Lenny's granddaughter Rashae Reeves is a poet and a spoken word artist. She created the poem that she recited on the song. Her words became the title of the song and the record, *That You Not Dare To Forget*.

MD: She has a great voice, and that is a beautiful poem.

VW: Rashae didn't know about the relationship between Miles and Cicely which is what the song was inspired by. So Lenny told her about their relationship and Rashae put pen to paper and that's what she came up with. Then Stanley Clarke came by and recorded his bass track.

I wasn't around for the recording of *Bitches Brew*, but throughout the entire recording process I asked Lenny if this was how those sessions felt, because he was a part of that record. When we recorded this all the cats came in and played the music with no egos, everybody was just chill and beautiful, it was incredible.

One thing I would like to mention is that I had dinner with some Japanese friends last night, and one of the guys cried listening to our new record. Uncle Miles has that effect on people and we're proud of having our association and relationship with Miles' music. We just wanted to put our own spin on it. That is the reason we decided to rename the group Miles Electric Band to M.E.B., to signify that we are creating our own music, inspired by Miles but as more than a tribute band.

> We had the idea to put a band together to celebrate the anniversary of Bitches Brew. I called some of the other guys who had played with Miles, or just have a strong admiration and love for him, to get everything started.

MD: I got the Miles box set a while back called *The Bootleg Series Vol 7. That's What Happened 1982-1985,* which has both you and Al Foster on it, and I read your liner notes. Unfortunately, I'm not sure how many people are reading liner notes these days …

VW: I DO!!

MD: So do I.

VW: Back in the day, my friends and I would chip in the money and buy an album, and we would listen to it from start to finish while we read the liner notes. We wouldn't skip around, we would dissect it, talk about it, and educate ourselves. That's a lost art.

MD: In the notes to that box set, you tell a great story about you having a band in Chicago with Robert Irving and Felton Crews, and Miles listening to you guys on the telephone and making musical suggestions and comments. Can you tell us that story?

VW: Bobby Irving, Randy Hall, Felton Crews, Glenn Burris and I would rehearse in my mom's basement. My mom, Dorothy, was a schoolteacher, and Miles' sister. My dad was a retired Captain in the Army and taught ROTC. My band would rehearse five days a week as long as I kept my grades up. We would we play on the weekends and do all sorts of stuff. So Uncle Miles would call and ask my mom to take the phone down to the basement and he would listen to us rehearse. After we would finish we would pass the phone around to each musician in the band. Miles would make musical suggestions.

MD: It sounds like he was almost producing your band over the phone.

VW: This happened for about three weeks straight, and in the fourth week he said, "Y'all want to make a record?" He flew us to New York and we did the Miles Davis record *Man with the Horn,* in 1979 and 80. We met Teo Macero, Stan Tonkel, and Dr. George Butler who was the executive producer. We rehearsed with Uncle Miles at his brownstone, and we recorded at CBS Studios. I still vividly remember it.

MD: When you would pass the phone around and he would critique you guys and give you advice what would he tell you? We all dream of getting advice and critique from Miles Davis.

VW: I wasn't privy to what he told Felton or Randy, but he would critique what he would hear, we listened to his advice, and we approached the music the next day with his thoughts in mind.

MD: So his words can live forever, what type of things did he tell you?

VW: For me, it was always about the groove. He would send me the records he loved. James Brown *The Big Payback*, Sly and the Family Stone *In Time* with Andy Newmark, *The Immortal Otis Redding* with Al Jackson Jr., and he loved Buddy Miles. He always told me to listen to Hendrix *Band of Gypsy's.* He wanted that groove. Miles wanted a radio friendly song, and that's why Randy composed "The Man with the Horn" for Miles.

Everybody thinks that we *made* Miles play our own commercial music, but you didn't *make* Miles Davis do *anything*! Some people think that we played with Miles because of nepotism. Nope! I'm sorry it's not true, none of that was true. What it came down to is that Miles wanted to get on the radio, we had some songs for him, and he had already been (as you said) producing us. We recorded about 15 songs, and they used "Shout" and "Man with the Horn," on the record. Then the band with Al Foster and Marcus Miller did the rest of the record.

It was great to be around Miles. He would change little things on the fly. He heard things differently. He would just change a little bit here and a little bit there. It was genius. He would tell me to open the hi-hat a little. Gil Evans was there too. Gil would hang out and just chill in the corner and then Miles would go over and whisper things to Gil. They would bounce things off of each other. It was heavy, I called it Miles Davis University.

MD: The only thing I don't like about your new record is that it's too short.

VW: There's more coming. We've got tunes that Darryl, Robert Irving, and I wrote, and more from the M.E.B. sessions. We have enough music for two or three more records done.

> Back in the day, my friends and I would chip in the money and buy an album, and we would listen to it from start to finish while we read the liner notes.

MD: Let's go down a few tracks from the new record? What can you tell me about "Hail to the Real Chief"?

VW: "The Chief" was Uncle Miles' nickname. At the time we recorded that, there was another president in office, so that's why we called it "Hail to the Real Chief." We were in the studio just grooving and Bernard Wright said, "I hear Marcus Miller on this tune." So, we called Marcus from Mozart Studios. We sent the track to Marcus and he sent it back with his killin' bass part. Stanley Nelson, who directed the *Miles Ahead* documentary, heard the track and wanted it on the soundtrack. I co-produced the documentary with Stanley Nelson, and it won an Emmy.

MD: You and Lenny White are playing double drums on some tracks, did you track at the same time, and why the decision to play double drums?

VW: The night before we were going to record I wanted to go hear some music at the Village Vanguard, so I called Lenny and suggested we run into to the city and hear some music. Lenny said, "No man, I'm going to get ready for tomorrow." Lesson learned, I got ready for tomorrow too. When we got to the session Lenny said, "I'm gonna play this B section and you play the groove." He always thinks outside the box. His drums were set up next to my drums and it worked. It was just like when Lenny did *Bitches Brew* with Jack DeJohnette and Don Alias. The relationship Lenny and I have is like big brother and little brother. We talk on the phone almost every day. When we recorded together, it was just perfect.

MD: So many of the musicians that have worked with Miles really do think outside the box. Like you said about Lenny, they all seem to create music like they are movie directors. It seems that he really instilled that vision on his sidemen.

VW: Someone said our M.E.B. record is a "great sonic movie," and we agree. Lenny's a big movie buff anyway, he and Mike Clarke go to the movies together once a week.

MD: On "Bitches are Back" you had rapper Nas and Ron Carter playing together.

VW: Nas and I did a thing called *Evolution of the Groove* back in 2006 so we have a relationship. Nas' father is trumpeter Olu Dara, so we had them on a sample from an old track. When we recorded that Lenny asked me to go find a rapper for the verses. So I called my little brother Scud One out of Chicago. He said he had just the right cat and we sent them the track. He recorded a rapper named Blu, and that's what you hear. Simply incredible.

MD: Vernon Reid really raised the bar on "Over My Shoulder."

VW: It was Lenny's idea to call Vernon. It was amazing, everyone we called said "Yes, I'll do it, just tell me where and when." We did quite a lot in one or two takes. Miles would often say, "Fear no mistakes, there are none."

For example, when (tabla player) Badal

Roy was making *On the Corner* with Miles, Badal was playing tabla right by Uncle Miles, so Miles looks down at Badal and says, "You start." And that's how they started the entire record. No charts, no click, nothing! Miles just looks down and says, "You start." Chick told me that they would meet for coffee after the *Bitches Brew* sessions and wonder, "What did we just do?" That's when you know you got something.

MD: Talk about playing with Ron Carter.

VW: I've known Ron all my life, and I still see this superhero glow when I'm around him. I'm like a little kid again. I get lost in the sound that he creates on the bass. You hear the notes, and you know that's Ron Carter. But you have to stay focused on playing the music. It was a beautiful blessing to have Ron on the record.

MD: Was this one of Wallace Roney's last recordings? We all miss him.

VW: When we played the track for Wallace, he heard it a couple of times and he went in and played beautifully. Wallace is a connection with Uncle Miles because he knew so much from being around him. A while back Wallace and I drove to the Zildjian factory from New York, and we just talked about music the entire time. Wallace was the last person my father saw me playing with before my dad passed away. And the day after my dad's funeral in Chicago, I flew to New York to play with Wallace and Marcus Miller. I have a really close connection with Wallace and his brother Antoine, their playing on this record was another magical moment.

MD: Another magical aspect to the new record is the artwork, where did that come from?

VW: That was done by Mikel Elam, he used to travel with Miles as his assistant. I'm a big fan of his work. I own some of his other pieces. I called Mike and said I would like to use some of your pieces that you've never shown as cover art for the new record. He said no, send me the music, I'll let the music speak to me, and I'll come up with the artwork from what I hear.

MD: Before you played with Miles, where were you coming from drum wise? How did you get started?

VW: In kindergarten I was the little drummer boy. When Uncle Miles would come to Chicago, my parents wanted to sit in the audience, but I always wanted to stand in the wings. From there I could get a bird's eye view of the communication and the dialog with the drummer. Back in the day, they would have four or five groups on the bill. But when Miles was headlining, I'd get to see all of the groups before him. I was in a trance watching all those drummers, I knew at a young age, that's what I wanted to do. Tony Williams told Wallace years later that he (Tony) could tell by the way I used to look at him, he knew I was going to play drums.

Miles had Columbia Records send records to my parent's house and I would take them and sit in the basement and just listen. I didn't understand most of it, but I wanted to hear it, I wanted to ingest it, I wanted to be part of it, and that's what I did. After I did my homework of course!

I was living in Chicago, so the AACM was very influential. I studied with Thurman Barker; I am cousins with Jerome Harris who played with Fontella Bass. Freddie and Maurice White from Earth, Wind, & Fire were very close friends of mine. I used to ask Maurice about the Chess Records drummers. I would play anything and do it with conviction. I was never interested in getting locked in to any one thing.

MD: So many drummers mention the fact that when they first heard some great music, they didn't understand it, but they still listened to it. Can you talk about the importance of listening to music and drumming that you don't quite understand?

VW: I was curious! I didn't understand it, but I wanted to. The more I listened, the more I would try to figure it out. As a kid, I didn't know the magnitude of who Miles Davis was, he was just Uncle Miles to me. We would go and pick up Uncle Miles at the airport, and every 5 or 10 steps people would stop him and ask for his autograph. I wondered, "Why

Richie Porter

is everybody stopping Uncle Miles all the time?" After I started playing more, I always played with musicians that were older than me. I would ask lots of questions. Young musicians and young people should ask more questions. I've always been curious, I'm still curious. When I'm teaching or doing master classes, I start by telling students not to be afraid to ask questions, that they can ask me anything they want. One time at a clinic I asked Tony, "What do you think about before you play?" He said, "Well I think about macaroni and cheese and fried chicken, he was trying to be funny, but I've always been curious. I think (like you said,) young people should ask questions and not be afraid, because knowledge is wealth.

MD: You can read a good lesson into Tony's answer, he wasn't thinking about the drums. Let's move on to the Miles band that you played in. It was a killer band with John Scofield, Bob Berg, Darryl Jones, and you. There is a DVD called *Live in Montreal* that proves it. What can you tell me about that band?

VW: After I did *Man with the Horn,* Darryl and I were doing sessions around Chicago, and we played with Ramsey Lewis. Darryl would always ask what it was like to play with Miles. When Miles' bass chair came up, I mentioned Darryl Jones, Nate Phillips from a group called Pleasure, and Felton Crews. As it turned out, Darryl was home when we called. I introduced them over the phone and Darryl auditioned (over the phone) on a Monday. Miles asked him when he could be in New York. Darryl said he could be in New York by Wednesday. Miles reacted with, "What cha' gonna do, walk here?" Miles sent him a plane ticket and Darryl and I were there on Tuesday. Darryl learned the music from board tapes. Miles heard his auditon and told me to tell Darryl that he got the gig. I told Darryl, and he told me, "I gotta hear Miles say it." So Miles told him he got the gig. I'll never forget one thing that Miles told Darryl before he auditioned. He said, "If I don't choose you, that doesn't mean you can't play." That's a pretty heavy thing to tell someone to put them at ease.

MD: Did the fact that he was Uncle Miles put you at ease when you started playing with him?

VW: I had really studied Al Foster's drumming, I watched Al like a hawk. When the chair became available, I knew a lot of the open hi-hat things that Miles liked. I love Al Foster's drumming! So I tried to incorporate all of that into what I was doing. Darryl and Bobby (Robert Irving) were already in the band, so it felt like home. We just kept taking the direction that Miles gave us.

MILES ELECTRIC BAND
Courtsey Miles Davis Estate

> I'll never forget one thing that Miles told Darryl before he auditioned. He said, "If I don't choose you, that doesn't mean you can't play." That's a pretty heavy thing to tell someone to put them at ease.

MD: Drum wise, what did you do after playing, recording, and touring with Miles from 1984 through 1987?

VW: I remember talking to Tony about what I should do next. He said, "You played with Miles, right?" I said, "Yeah, I did." He said, "So now it's time to do your own thing." I never forgot that. My friend had a studio in Stockton, California so I was recording a lot of sessions there. I started thinking about my own project and trying to compose music, but I didn't turn down anybody who called me for work. I knew it was time to do my own thing, but I didn't know what that was. Then I set up a production company, we signed Phil Upchurch, Ivan Neville, a very talented artist named Niles Rivers, and a few other unsigned artists. We started cutting records at a place called Rumbo Studios, which was Captain and Tennille's old studio. I created a mini-Motown, but we didn't get anything on the charts. But I spent a lot of money doing it because that was my passion, that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to create, I wanted to have a sound.

MD: I really feel the spirit of Miles on this new record, could you guys feel it in the studio when you were recording?

VW: I don't want to sound too (whatever…) But a lot of times Uncle Miles comes to me in a dream. He doesn't say anything, I just see his face and his smile, it's not frightening or anything. When we were recording, we all definitely felt his spirit and his vibe at Mozart Studios. But again, we were trying to come up with some new ideas and Miles Davis University was influencing us all. We had Ron Carter, John Scofield, Wallace Roney, Bernard Wright, Lenny, so we couldn't help but feel him there. We built the M.E.B. based on what he taught us. This isn't an "all-star" record, and we didn't approach it that way at all.

MD: With all of those guests, and all the music on the new record, how did you know when anything was "done"?

VW: Lenny and I trusted each other to know when the project was finished.

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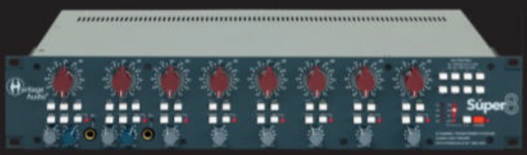

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MD: What drummers have influenced you a great deal?

VW: Everybody! I am influenced by my drumming heroes and I am continually influenced by drummers around the world. Too many to mention. You know who you are!

I'm stealing and listening all the time. I keep music on in the house 24-7. When I was living with Uncle Miles and my cousin Erin, Miles was always listening to music. He never stopped listening. But he never listened to his old records. He would have MTV on all day with the sound turned down, and his horn next to him. And if there was something cool on, he'd turn it up and learn and play the melody. Then after he played the melody, he'd go to the piano.

MD: What melodies and songs would he play along to?

VW: He dug "Broken Wings" by Mr. Mister, of course, "Human Nature" and "Time After Time" that's why he recorded them. He liked the African band Kassav, Scritti Politti, Prince, George Duke, I have a DAT of him playing Aretha Franklin's "Natural Woman." He loved the melody of Tina Turner "What's Love Got to Do With It." I've never forgotten all of that. Like Miles, I'm still a musical sponge. You should never pigeonhole yourself into one style of music.

> When we were recording, we all definitely felt his spirit and his vibe at Mozart Studios.

I was actually at the session when Miles played on Toto's "Don't Stop Me Now." I loved Jeff Porcaro. I remember (from the Toto session) how Miles put himself in these different situations, and he would always put his stamp on the song. That's what made it Miles. No one could put their stamp on a beautiful ballad like Miles. He put his stamp on everything he played. That's why we love Miles.

Miles Davis changed the course of music numerous times in his career, yet he still had that thirst and that hunger for melodies— it was incredible. He was always changing. He even changed his clothes three or four times a day. You would be hanging out at the house and look over and Uncle Miles would suddenly be wearing a completely different outfit. At his house he had (what we used to call) his stations. He would just move from station to station, and never waste a minute of the day. He was always creating. I witnessed that firsthand. You had to be there.

MD: And the new record gives us a small glimpse of what it was like to be there.

Check out Vince's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

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How To Deal with Nervousness

By Chris Lesso

"The struggle ends when the gratitude begins."
-Neale Donald Walsch

The RLG mantra will empower you to channel new levels of energy and creativity when it counts. Performance anxiety can get in the way of big moments when all we want to do is shine. There are so many things that DON'T work, like trying to talk yourself out of it or falling into the trap of trying to impress others. There's no magic cure, but there is a way to shift focus and get back to our best.

Do this thought experiment: You're onstage about to play, and you see five people coming in being seated at a table right next to the stage. Your eyes widen in amazement as you realize it's five of your favorite drummers, teachers, mentors, or biggest inspirations. (We're imagining, so they could be alive or dead.) Who are the 'Big 5' you hold dear? Well, there they are, about to check your band out, and they're watching. How do you feel? The revealing question is, how would it affect your playing? Whoever you imagine at your table resonates with how deeply you care. We would all definitely notice, because we all want to sound our best. But how do we become it when it counts?

How we choose to react reveals how centered we are in our self-expression. We're aware of the outer world we can't control, but we must own the inner game of what we can control. How would things play out if you stay stuck in your head, hyper analyzing every note while trying to impress everyone? There's no right or wrong, only consequences. Focus is like a spotlight, and whatever you shine it on expands. Gearing up to impress is ME based. Instead of getting all wrapped up in ourselves, what if we shift the focus to WE?

This literally happened to me when I performed at the Sonor Drumfest a few years ago. Of course, it's a DRUMfest, so the room is already filled with drummers. And lining the back of the hall was all my heavy-hitting peers, all of whom I looked up to and respected greatly. This is when *imposter syndrome* tries to sabotage the moment by asking self-defeating questions like, 'What the heck am I doing here?' Halfway into the first song I did a double take, because there at side stage behind the curtain was Steve Smith eating a sandwich. He was performing later in the day, and there he was checking me out. Steve has been one of my biggest influences for forever. Besides stealing his haircut, I've learned a trove of knowledge from him. It could be a moment like this when one of your heroes is checking you out, or maybe it's the *red light fever* of recording. It might simply come from playing in front of friends and family. However, in the moment of impact, we must not get rattled, instead we can draw from a deeper source of undefeatable expression that's all our own.

Nothing works without first doing the work. If I hadn't prepared like a madman, shown up early to go through every contingency, and kept myself in top shape with a pro athlete mindset, nothing would have saved me. The basics need to be in place before anything. After putting in the work, the RLG attitude keeps us at our best in those high-pressure situations that are sure to come our way.

RLG: Be Real, Listen, Have Gratitude

BE REAL: 'Do you'. Own your uniqueness. Speak YOUR voice on the drums loud and proud, never trying to be something or someone else you're not.

LISTEN: Instead of getting all wrapped up in your own head, take in the grand landscape of the music enveloping you. Lift the focus off of you and into awareness of the space you're in. You can 'listen' with all five senses. Reach out into the world instead of getting all spun up inside of your own drama.

HAVE GRATITUDE: Golf icon Jack Nicklaus said that even in the most intense competitions, he was still able to take in the striking beauty of the course while thinking to himself, 'Wow, this is pretty amazing I get to be here right now.' Don't ever become so jaded that you don't see the big magic in what you're doing! We don't HAVE to do this, we GET to. Through any struggle, we can always come back to gratitude.

Live out your RLG to overcome fear and you'll find your insecurity and self-doubt dissipating, leaving the best of you to shine in the world. Transform through drumming.

Are you ready to rise to your 2.0 in drumming and life? Chris Lesso's LTR DRUMMING METHOD is for drummers who want to reach higher. If you're ready to unleash your best self through drumming, book your FREE vision session here at **chrislesso.net/LTRDRUMMING**

Check out Chris's *Modern Drummer* profile page at moderndrummer.com

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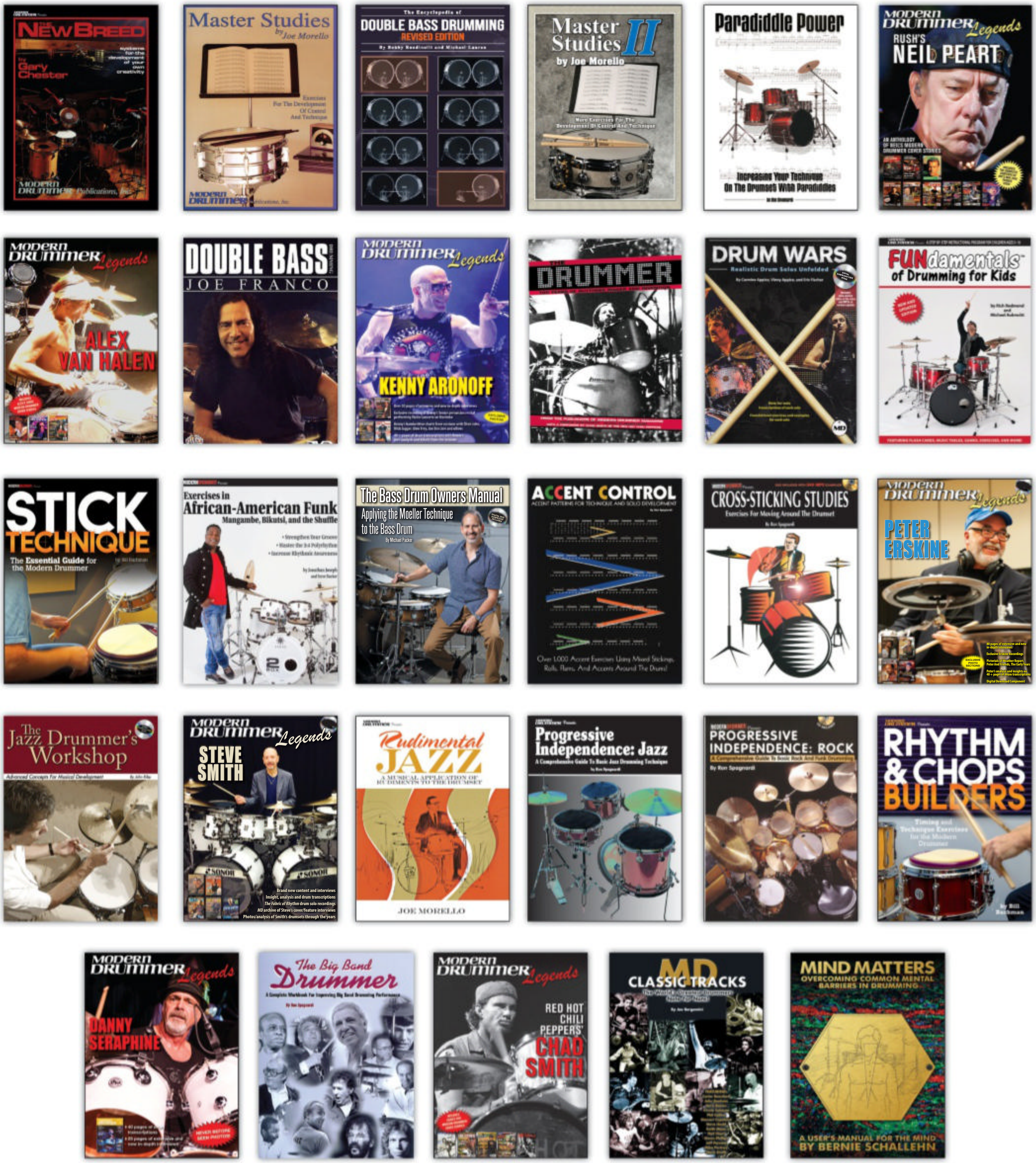
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The Bass Drum Owners Manual:

Playing the Hi-Hat

By Michael Packer

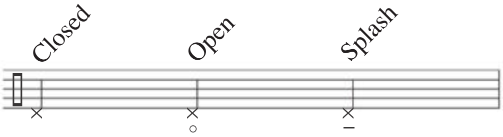
This month *Modern Drummer* will continue to include excerpts from Michael Packer's essential book on bass drum control and technique *The Bass Drum Owners Manual: Applying the Moeller Technique to the Bass Drum.* As you will see, this is a new way of thinking about bass drum (and foot) control that is based in an old, popular, and useful hand technique called The Moeller Technique. Michael addresses the essential components of bass drum and hi-hat control. Let Michael's wisdom and the wisdom of the Moeller Technique help you improve the control, sound, and eventually speed, of your feet, regardless of musical style. This month Michael addresses the hi-hat foot, and breaks down the motions of the left foot.

The Hi-Hat Playing Position

Position your foot on the hi-hat pedal board so the tip of the foot is near or at the top. Raise the heel approximately one to two inches off the ground, keeping all the weight of the leg on the tip of the foot. This will keep the hi-hat cymbals closed. If a tight hi-hat sound is desired apply a lot of pressure. For a looser but still closed sound back off the pressure just a little. When resting drop the heel to the pedal board. The foot never leaves the pedal.

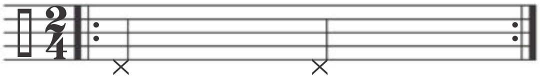
Hi-Hat Notation

The following notation will be used for the hi-hat throughout this article:

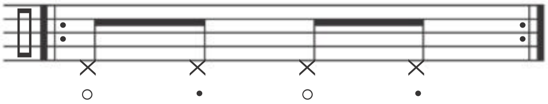


The Hi-Hat Strokes

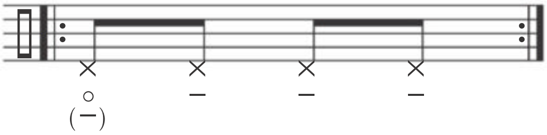
When playing a closed sound with the foot lift the heel to its playing position and bounce the leg up and down. The heel will not drop to the pedal board after each stroke. It stays up and the weight remains between the ball and the tip of the foot. This keeps the cymbals closed after each stroke. See example 1A.



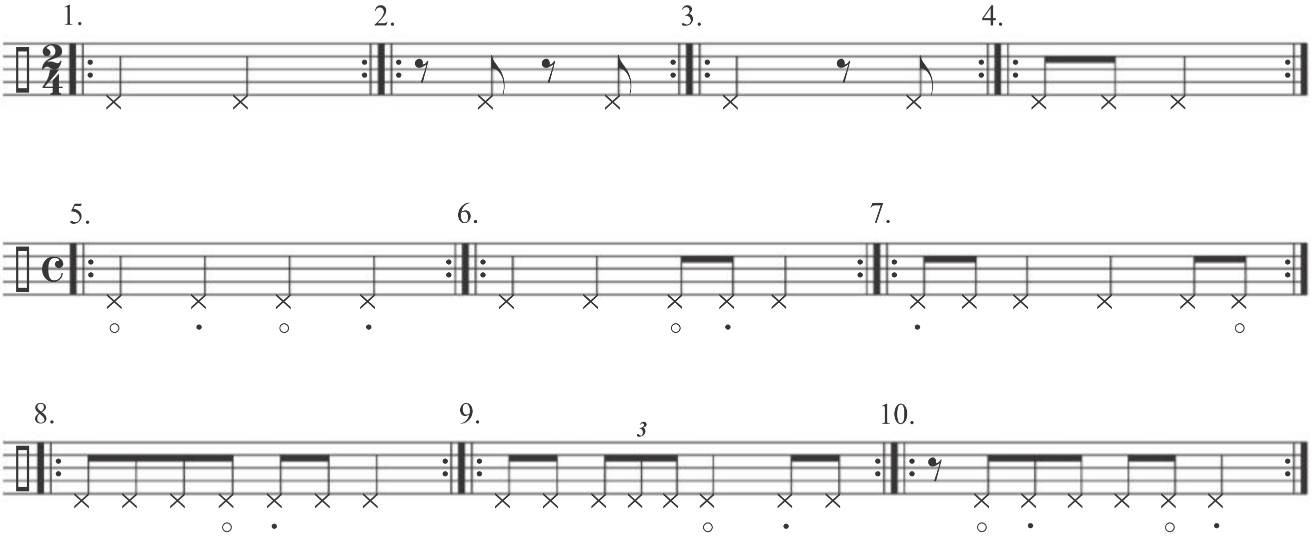
For open, then closed sound we will use the heel toe rocking technique period to open, drop the heel to the pedal board. Then quickly lift the heel and apply the pressure to the tip of the foot, thus, closing the cymbals. Repeat these motions as necessary. See example 1B.



To play successive splash or open sounds, play the first note as an open. The following notes are played by dropping the heel and keeping the foot at a 45-degree angle. This causes the cymbals to splash together. Continue this motion until returning to your original playing position, redistributing the weight to the tip of the foot and closing the cymbals. See example 1C.



Hi-Hat Exercises



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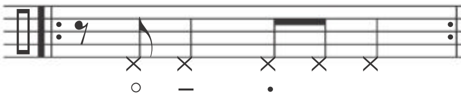

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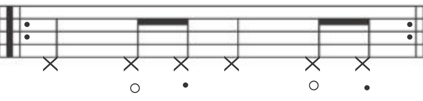

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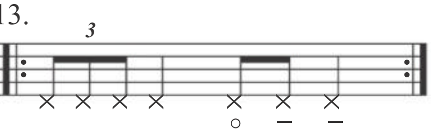

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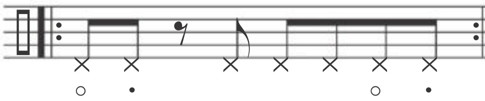

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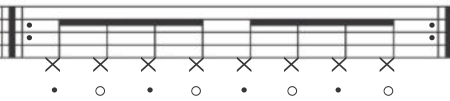

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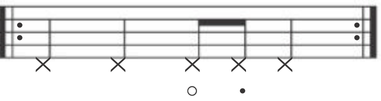

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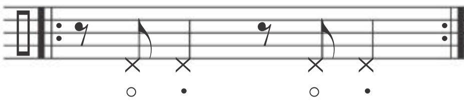

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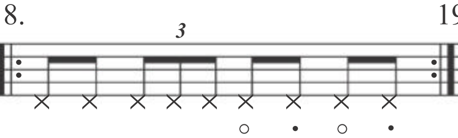

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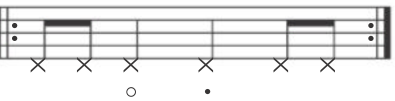

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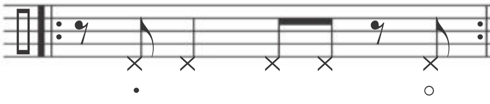

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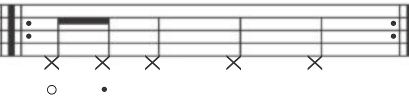

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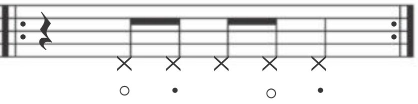

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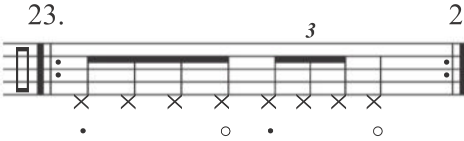

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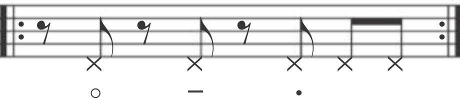

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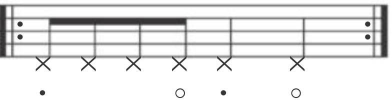

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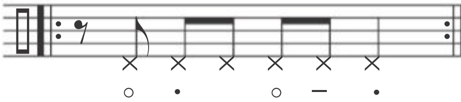

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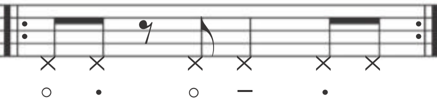

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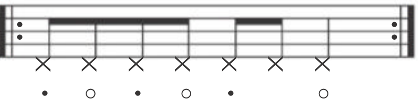
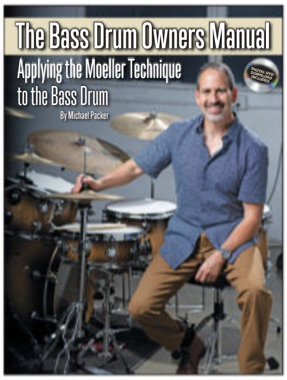


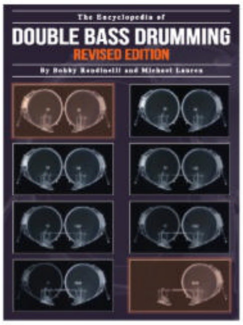

The Bass Drum Owners Manual
Applying the Moeller Technique to the Bass Drum
By Michael Packer

Check out Michael's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *The Bass Drum Owners Manual* at moderndrummer.com

The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming

Binary Beats

By Bobby Rondinelli and Michael Lauren



In the new and revised edition of the *Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming*, Bobby includes nine new double bass drumming chapters. The new and expanded edition covers contemporary techniques such as bass drum double strokes, feet-only exercises, binary and ternary rhythms, "skiplets", beat turnarounds, the "ladder", and playing doubles with the hands while playing singles with the feet. These concepts will challenge your playing while expanding your double bass vocabulary. If practiced with intention and diligence, this material will help to prepare you for the demands of today's music. This material is advanced, but completely attainable for anyone who has completed the previous chapters in my book.

This month Bobby explains his concept of binary beats in double bass drum grooves in one, two, and four-bar beats. Remember that most beats are written with strong foot lead (if you are right-handed, then that would be your right foot.) Some right-handed players lead with their left foot—whatever works for you is OK. Always strive for great quality of sound and groove and remember to start slowly at first. Have fun!

-Don't flam the snare, make sure it lands right on the bass drum.

-In the beginning, lighten up on your snare hit so that you can really hear where it is hitting in relation to the bass drum.

-Don't worry about speed try to make your feet sound even.

-Work on getting your weak foot to sound as loud as your strong foot.

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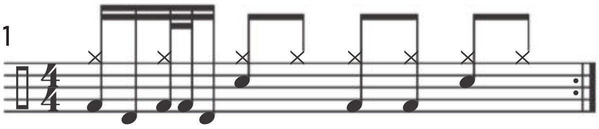

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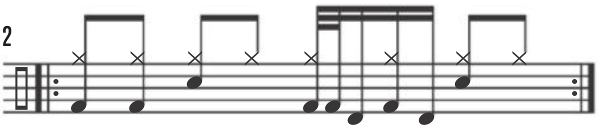

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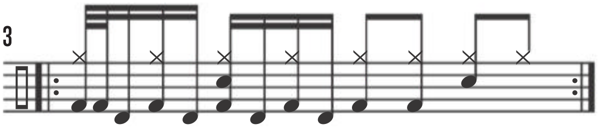

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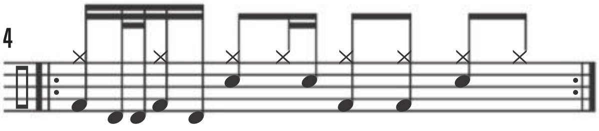

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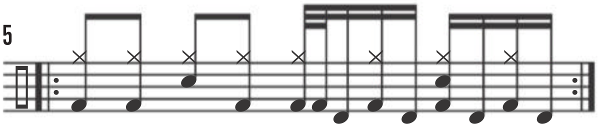

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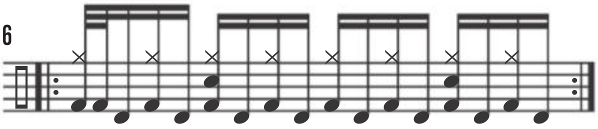

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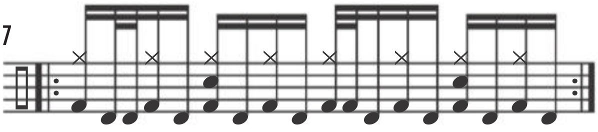

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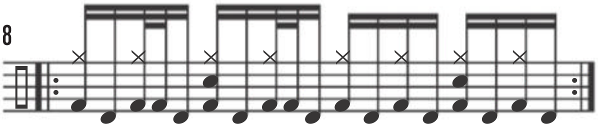

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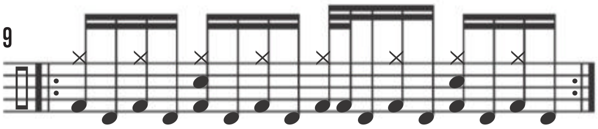

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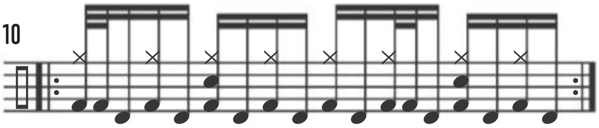

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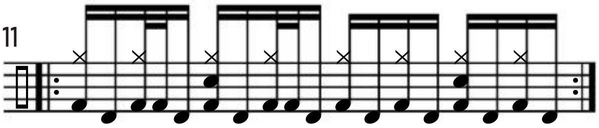

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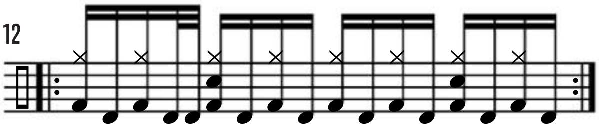

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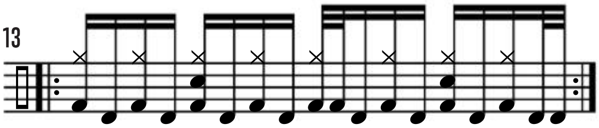

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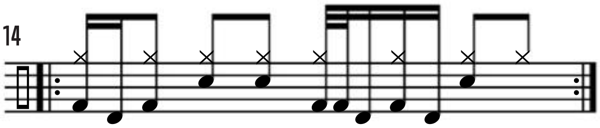

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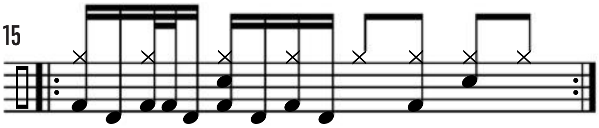

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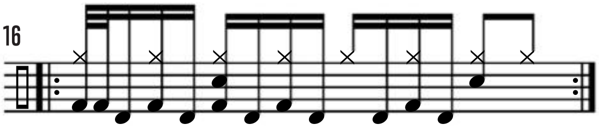

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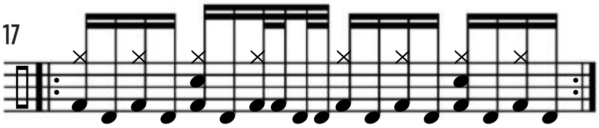

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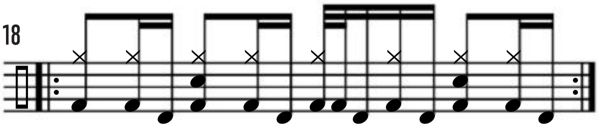

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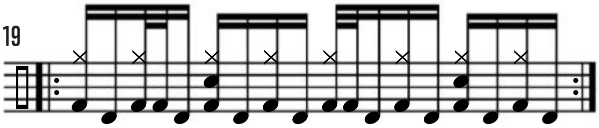

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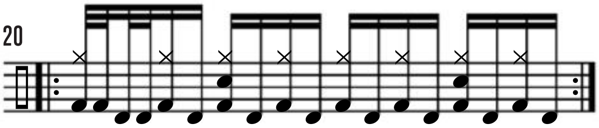

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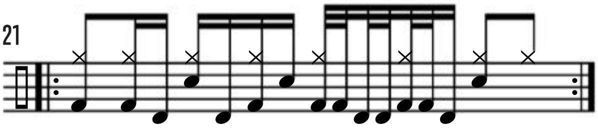

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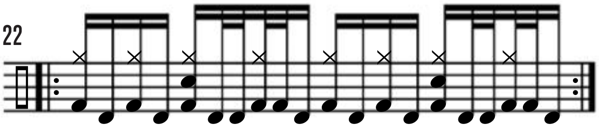

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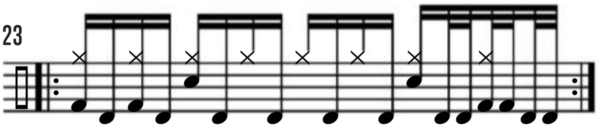

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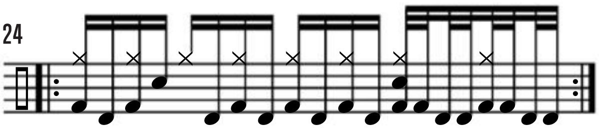

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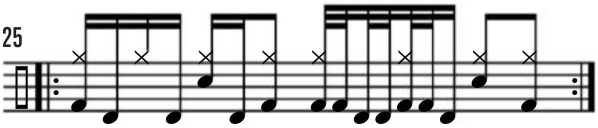

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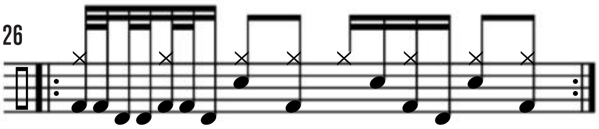

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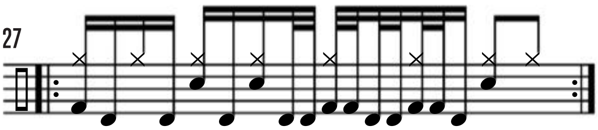

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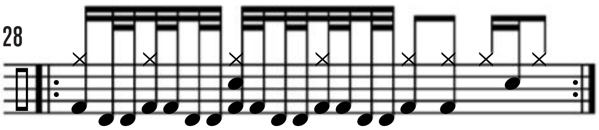

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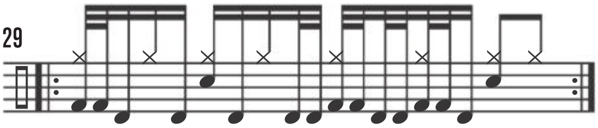

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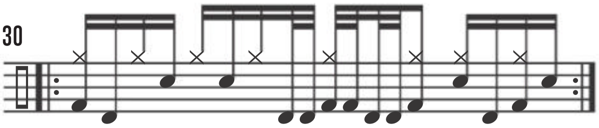

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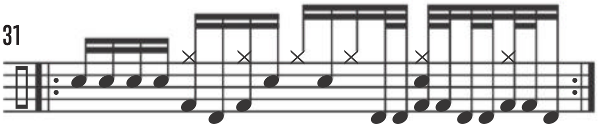

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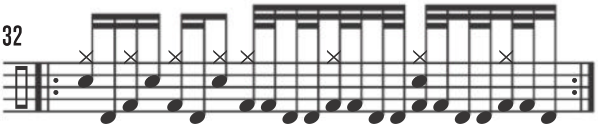

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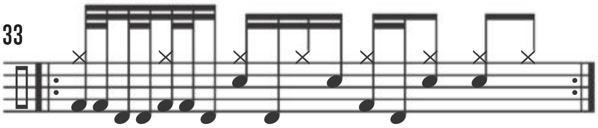

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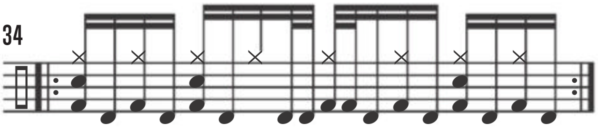

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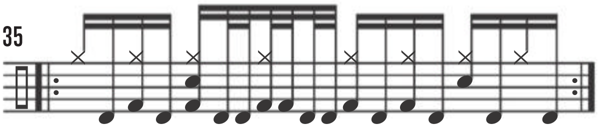

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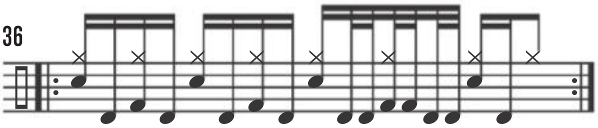

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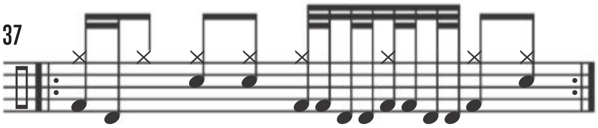

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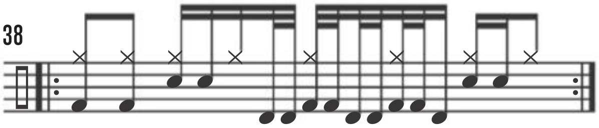

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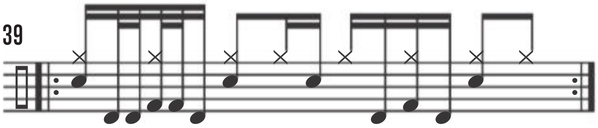

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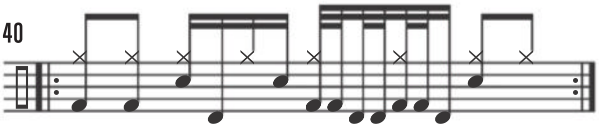

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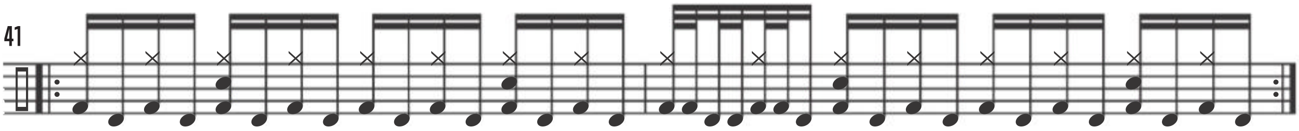

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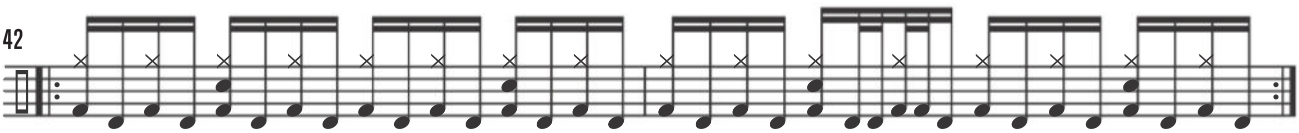

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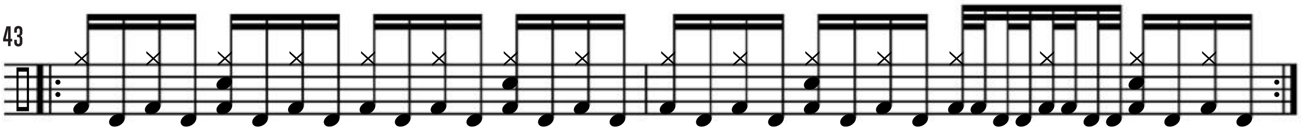

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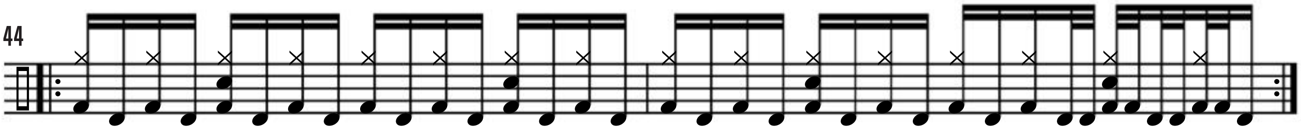

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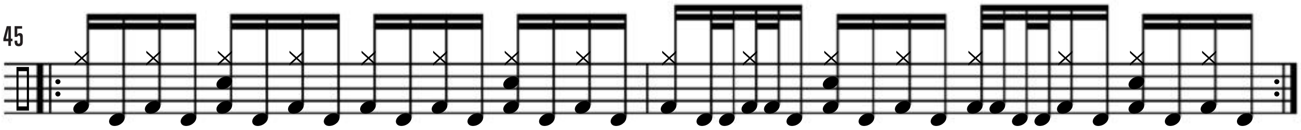

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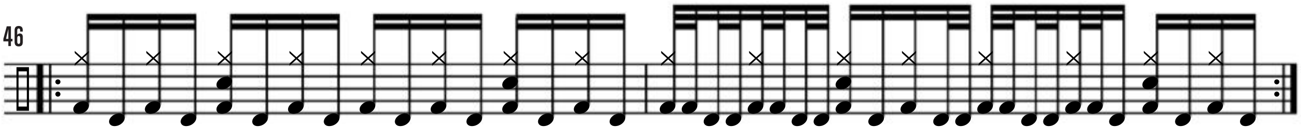

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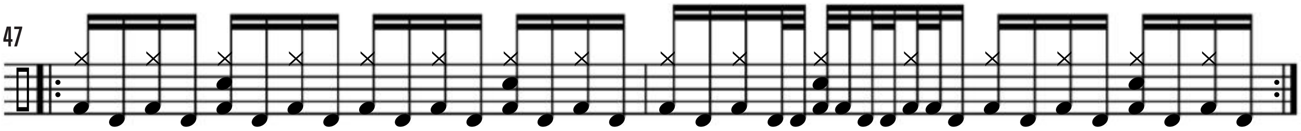

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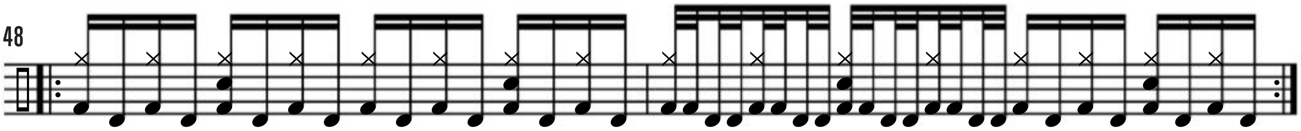

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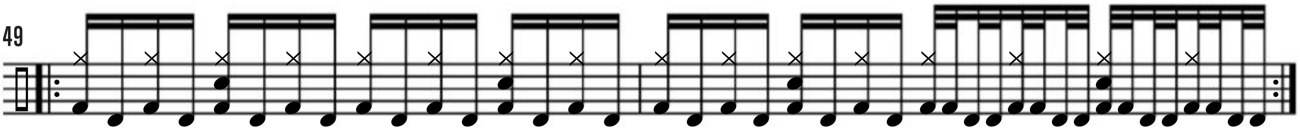

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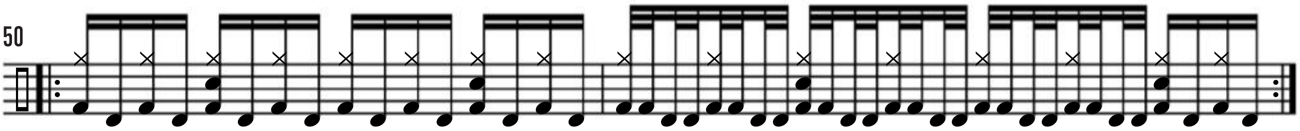

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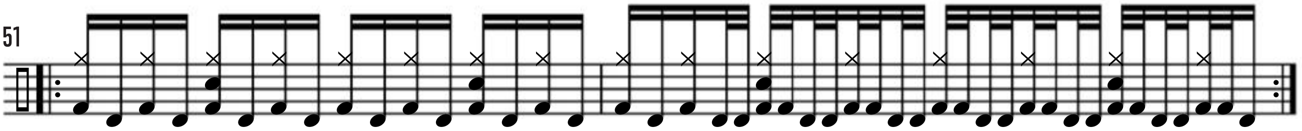

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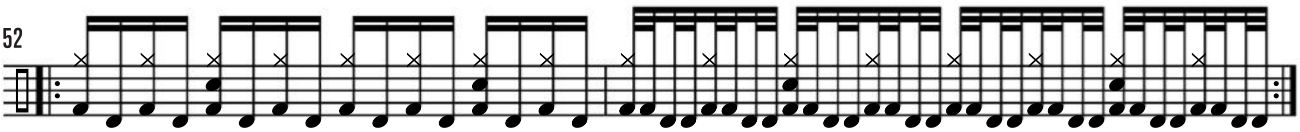

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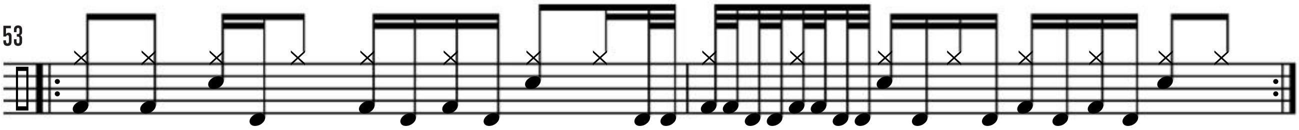

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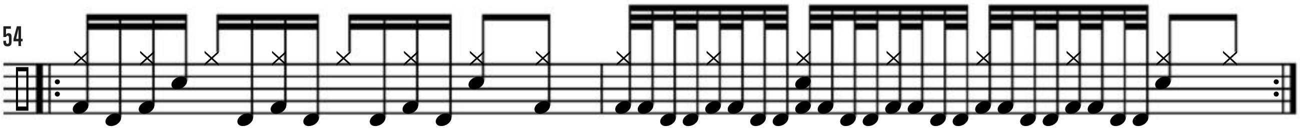

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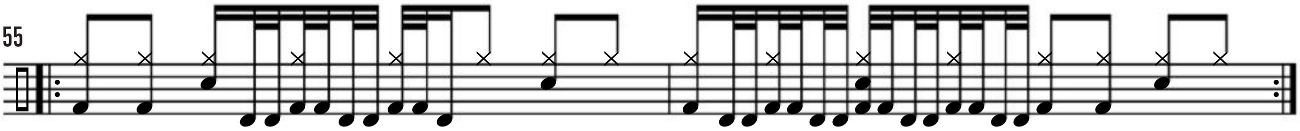

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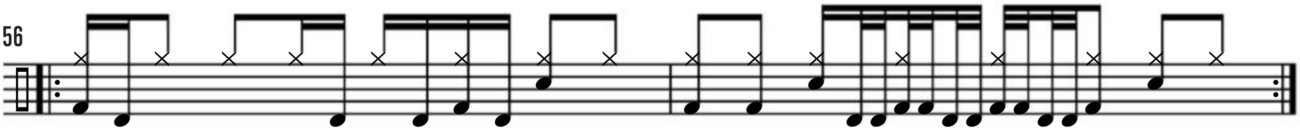

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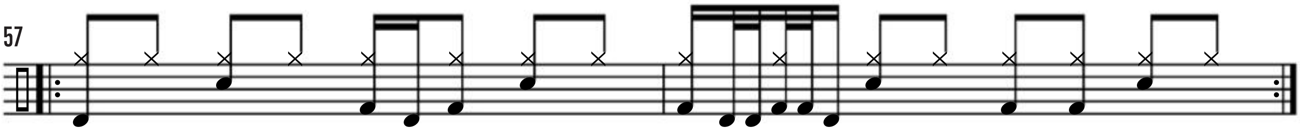

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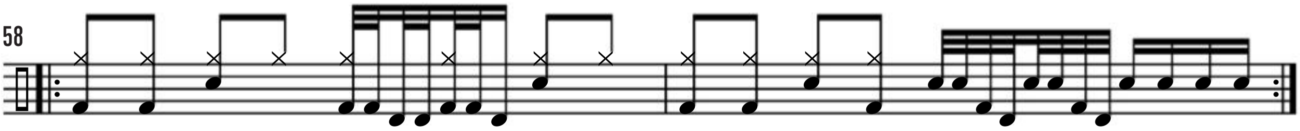

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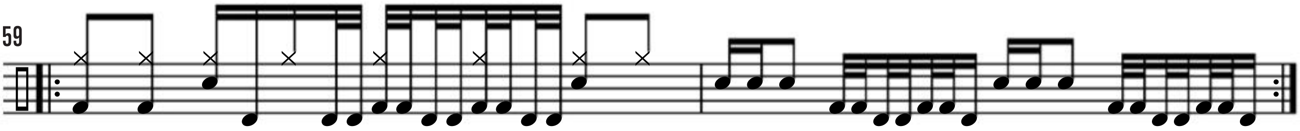

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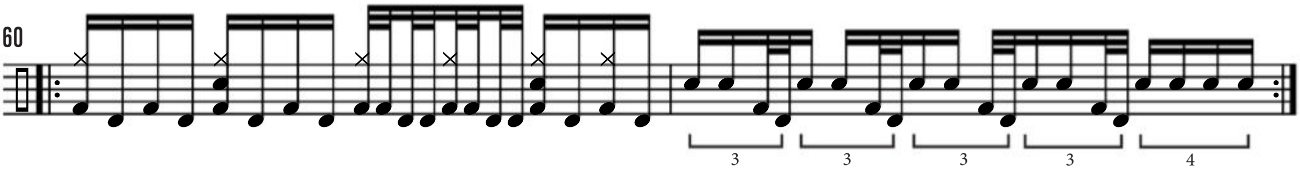

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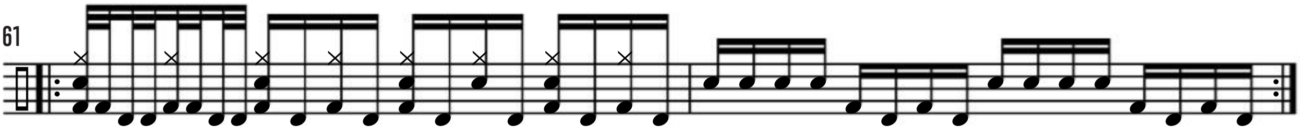

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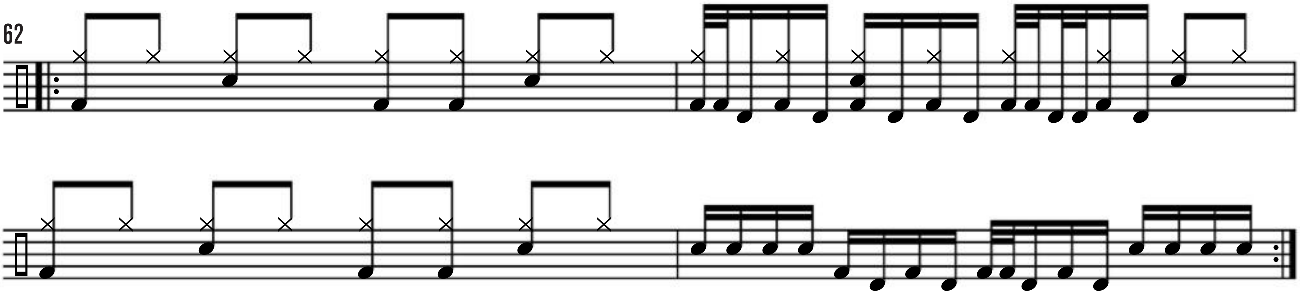

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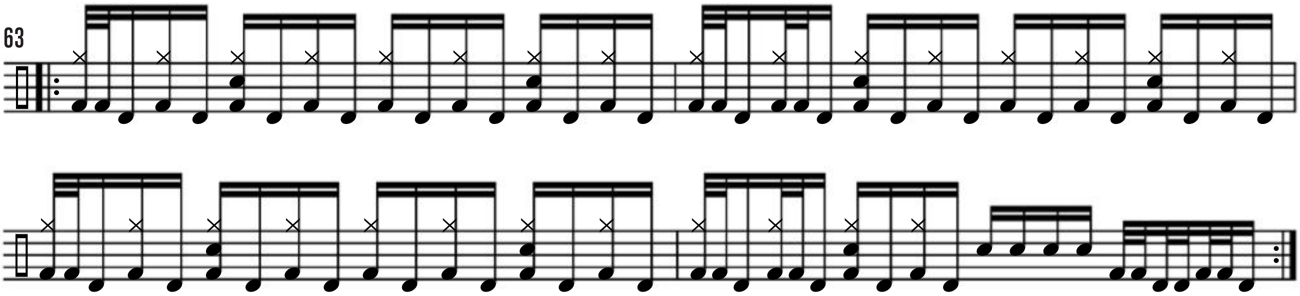

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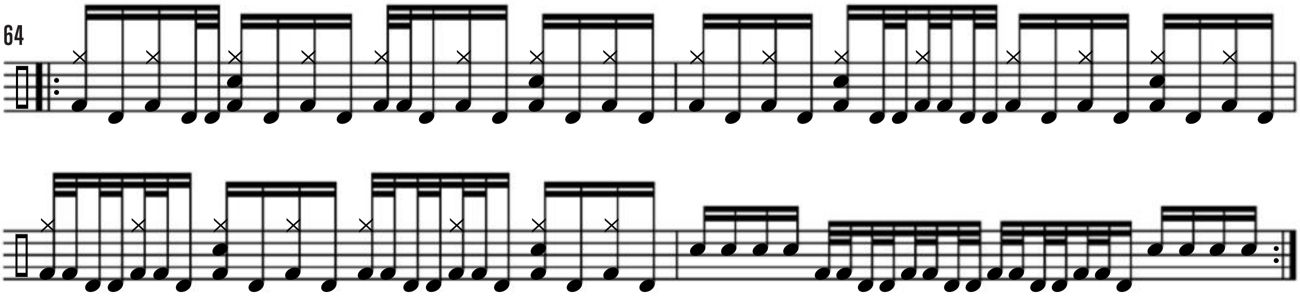

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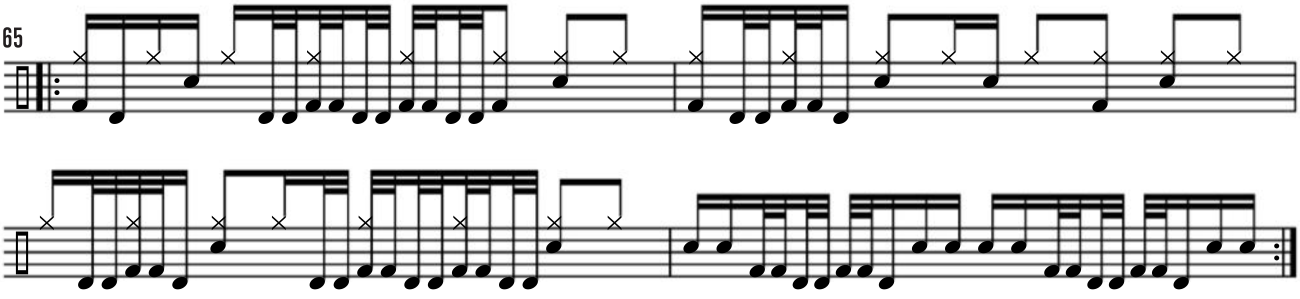
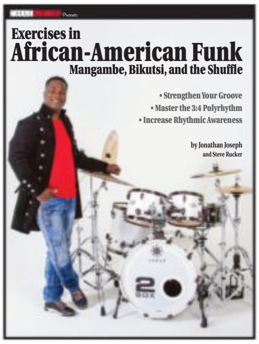


Check out Bobby's *Modern Drummer* profile pages and get your copy of *The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming* at moderndrummer.com

Exercises in African-American Funk

"Mangambe, Bikutsi, and the Shuffle"

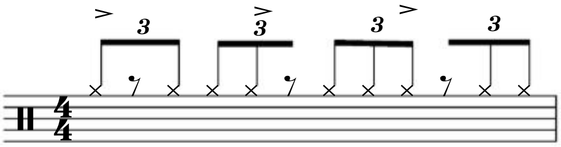
By Jonathan Joseph


Exercises in
African-American Funk
Mangambe, Bikutsi, and the Shuffle
• Strengthen Your Groove
• Master the 3:4 Polyrhythm
• Increase Rhythmic Awareness
by Jonathan Joseph
and Steve Rucker

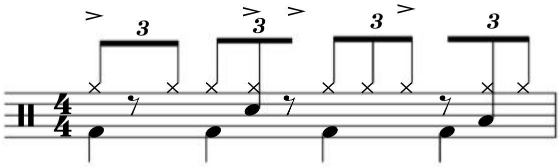
In *Modern Drummer's* ongoing introduction to Jonathan Joseph's book *Exercises in African American Funk: Mangambe, Bikutsi, and the Shuffle;* This month we will continue with Jonathan's explanation of a unique African groove called Bikutsi.

Bikutsi is a musical genre from Cameroon that features the 3:4 polyrhythm. It has roots in the traditional music of the Beti people, who live around the city of Yaounde', along with various elements of the pop-rock idiom.

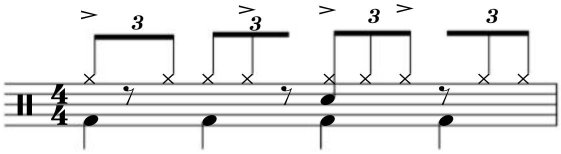
The characteristic rhythm of the Bikutsi is a grouping of triplets in a four-note pattern. Elements of this chapter are directly related to lessons discussed in earlier issues of *Modern Drummer*. If you aren't clear on the 3:4 polyrhythm, please review those lessons.



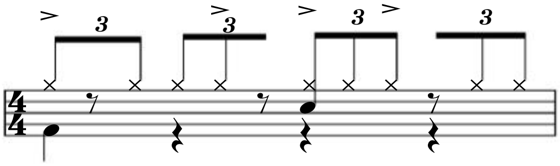
Here's an example of a bikutsi-pop drumset rhythm.



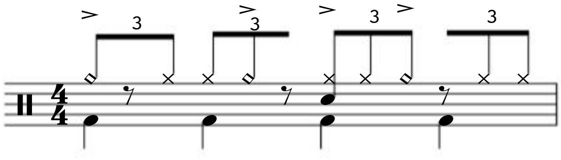
By moving the snare accent to beat 3, we can create a simple bikutsi shuffle-funk pattern.



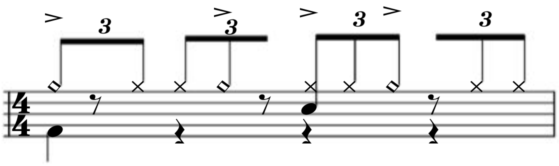
Here's a shuffle-funk variation with the bass drum on the first beat only.



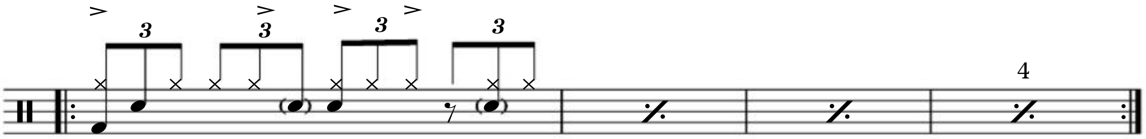
We can also open the hi-hat where the accents occur.

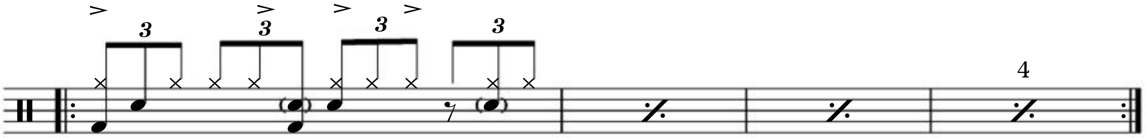


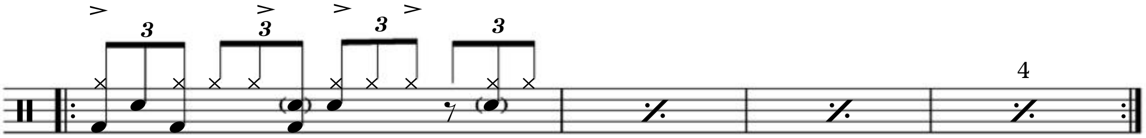
Here's the same variation with the bass drum on the first beat only.

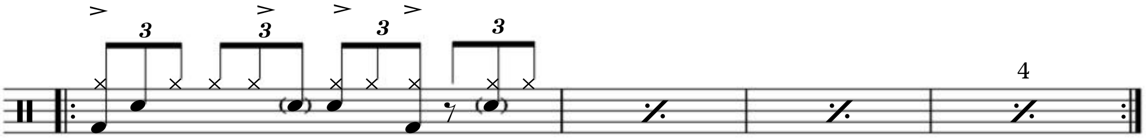


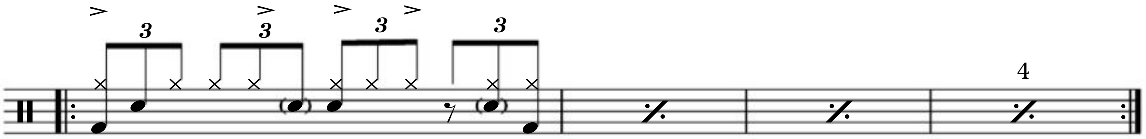
Here are the shuffle-funk bass drum patterns from the previous chapters with the bikutsi rhythm played on the hi-hat.

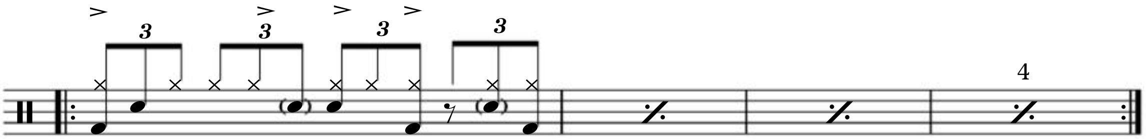


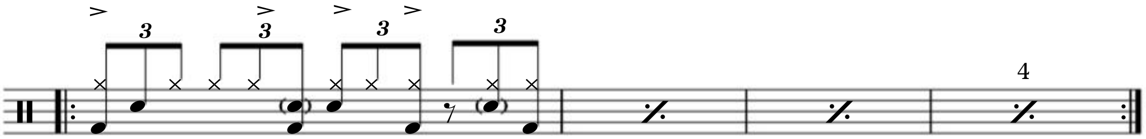


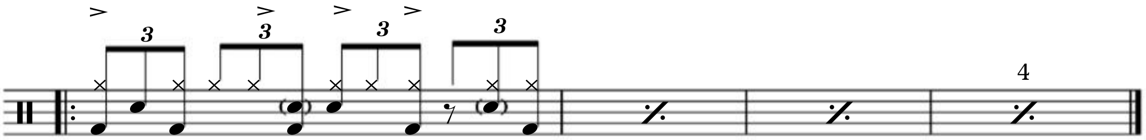




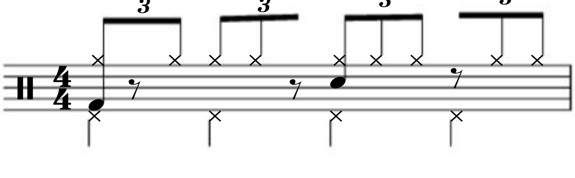




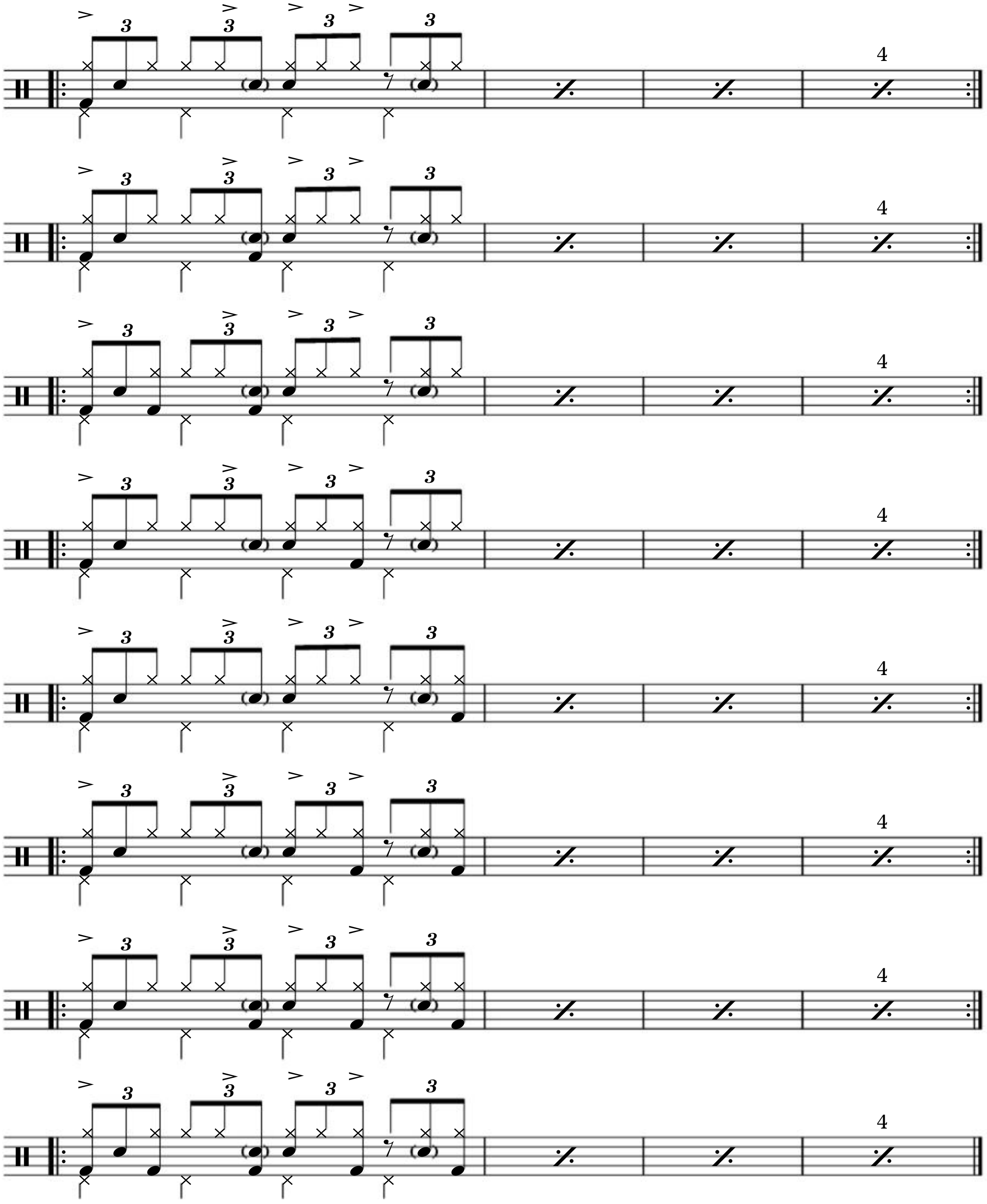




Next, move the hi-hat part to the ride cymbal and play quarter notes on the hi-hat with the foot. Here’s a simple version.

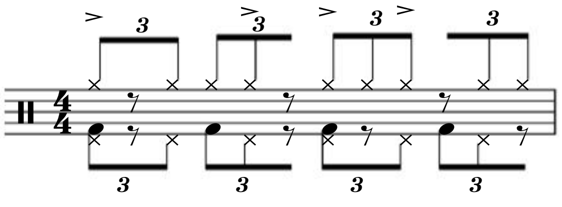


And here's the same variation with the shuffle-funk bass drum patterns added from the previous exercises.

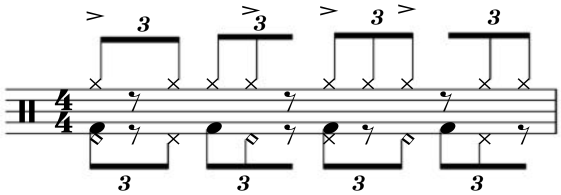


Here's a three-step process to create the long three on the hi-hat with the foot along with the bikutsi ride pattern.

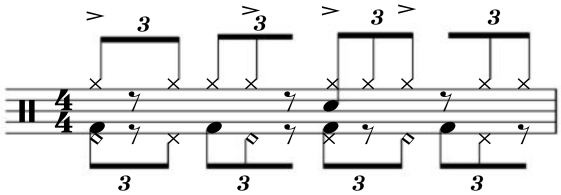
Step 1: Play six against four on the hi-hat with the foot, which aligns with the accents that are played on the ride.



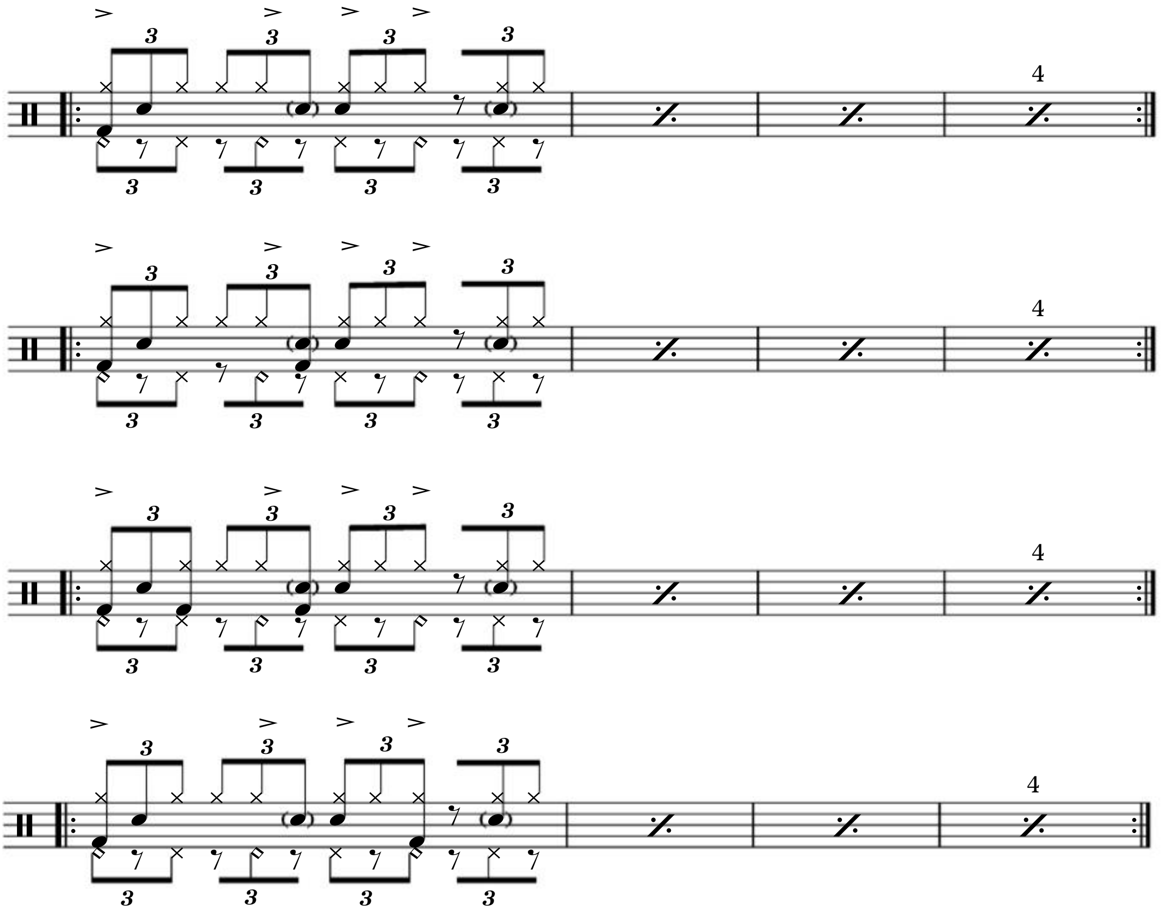
Step 2: Splash every other hi-hat note, starting on beat 1. These splashes can be achieved by using a heel-toe movement with the foot, creating the long three.

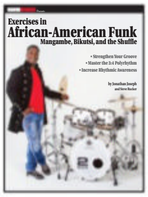


Step 3: Play the snare on beat 3.



Here are the same patterns from before with the hi-hat splashing on every other note to create the long three.





Check out Jonathan's drummer profile page and get your copy of *Exercises in African-American Funk* at moderndrummer.com

Bill Stewart's Phrasing in Five

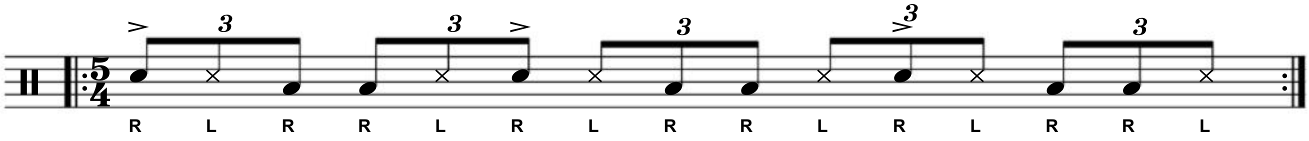
By Daniel Bédard

I've been a big Bill Stewart fan for quite some time now. Ever since I heard him on his first solo outing, I've always looked forward to the various records to which he would collaborate. One of Bill's best collaborations is with jazz guitarist John Scofield and if I had to pick a favorite recording, it would be the amazing live record called *Enroute*.

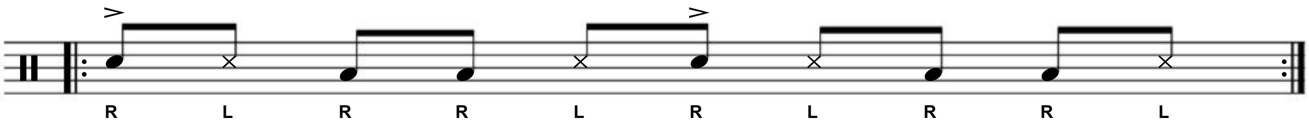
In this set of exercises, I decided to focus on the pattern Bill plays in the introduction of the 5/4 song "Toogs". He plays a cool rhythm over the snare and floor tom, and I thought it would be a good idea to develop some more patterns inspired by that.

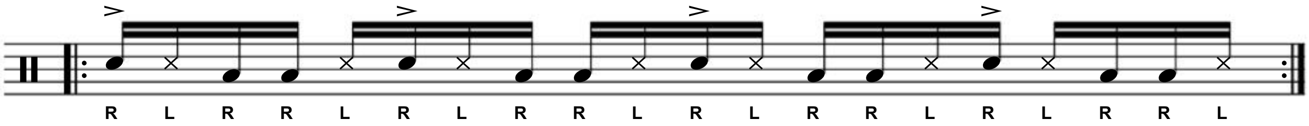
The Original Idea:

Bill plays a five note pattern using the RLRRL sticking. His right hand plays the snare and the floor tom while his left hand stays on the snare playing rim clicks.



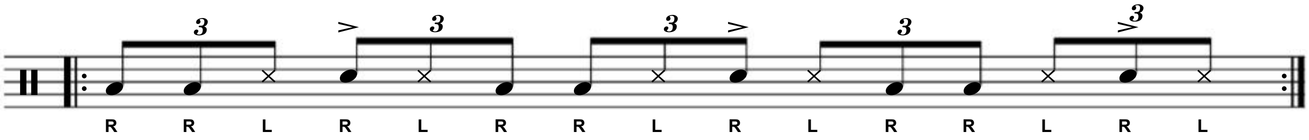
I figured we could take the same idea and play it in 8th and 16th notes to change things up and expand our vocabulary a bit:



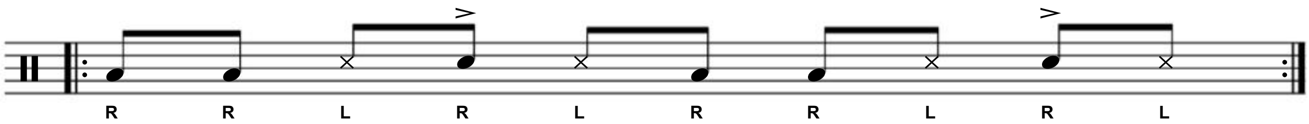


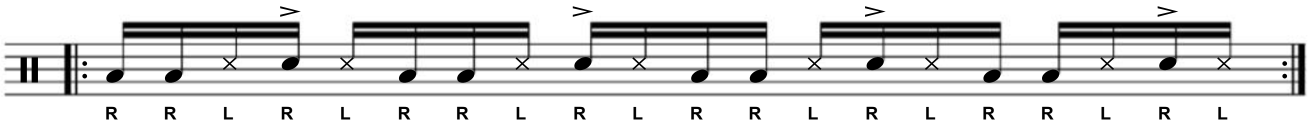
Changing the Original 5/4 pattern

The original 5 notes grouping uses a sticking that goes RLRRL so I thought we might also try RRLRL which would create a new sounding pattern.

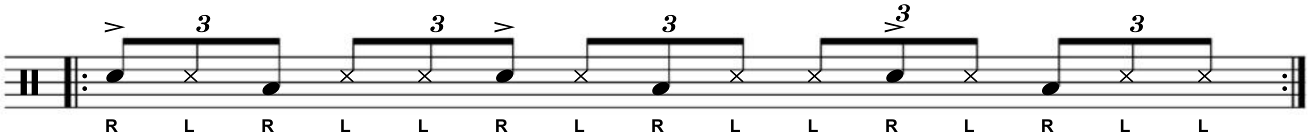


Once you go through the idea in triplets, I figured we could still play it in 8ths and 16ths.

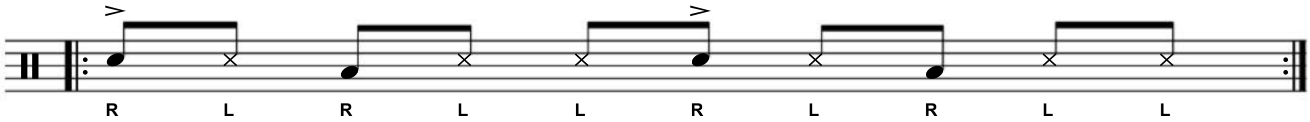


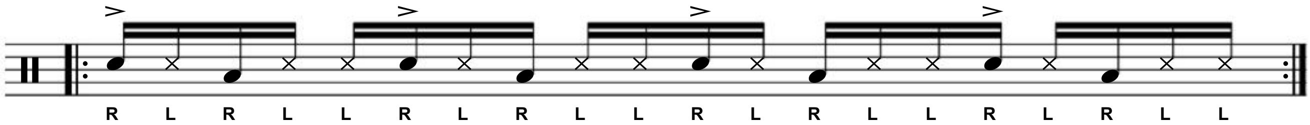


And here's one more five note sticking inspired by the original Bill Stewart idea. Now, we'll use RLRLL. Once again, the subtle change creates a new sound.



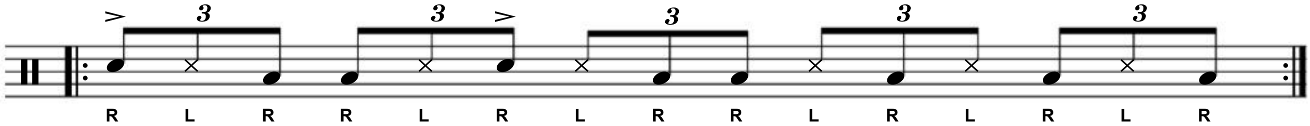
Again, let's play it in both 8ths and 16ths.





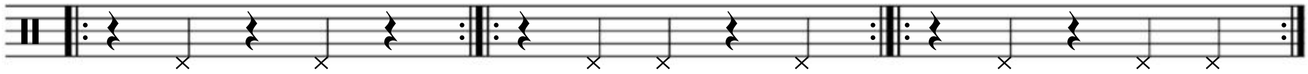
One Variation:

At some point during the song, Bill changes his original pattern with the variation below. I find it creates a nice turnaround in the pattern. Try playing four bar phrases ending with this variation.



Hi-hat foot patterns:

Bill splashes his hi-hat foot on all 5 quarters notes when he plays the original idea. Try going through the variations using these other hi-hat foot pattern ideas. If you get confused, make sure you count out loud.



When you are comfortable with all these ideas, you can try creating four phrases by playing four bars of time in 5/4 and then playing four bars of one of the patterns we discussed above. This way, you'll find these ideas creeping their way in your playing. Be sure to check out John Scofield's *Enroute* record, there are many more ideas to discover there.

Daniel Bédard is a professional drummer based in Montreal, Canada. He plays with various acts around town and teaches many students. He's currently writing an all-encompassing snare drum book. **www.danielbedardrums.com**

Check out Daniel's *Modern Drummer* profile page at moderndrummer.com

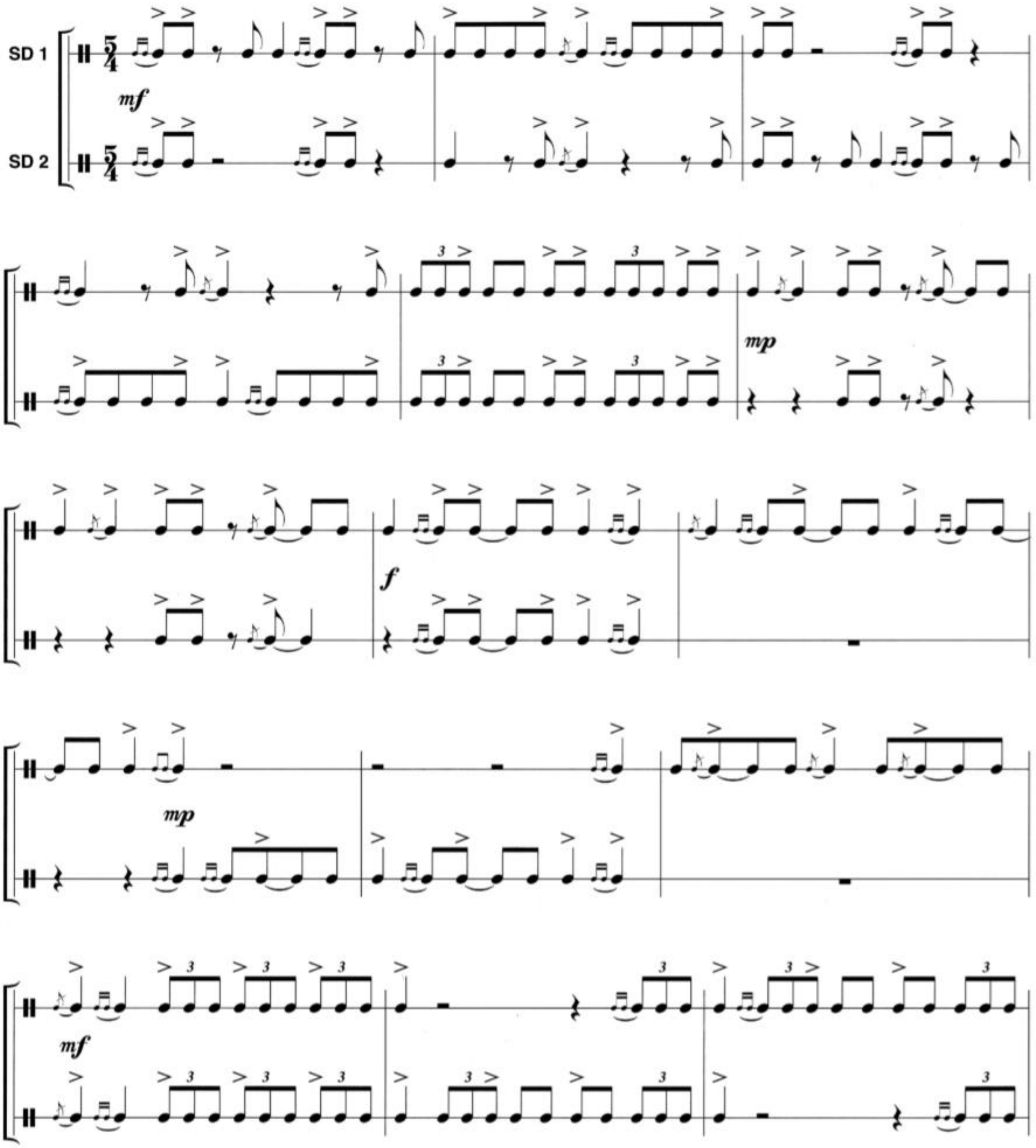
Snare Drum Duets

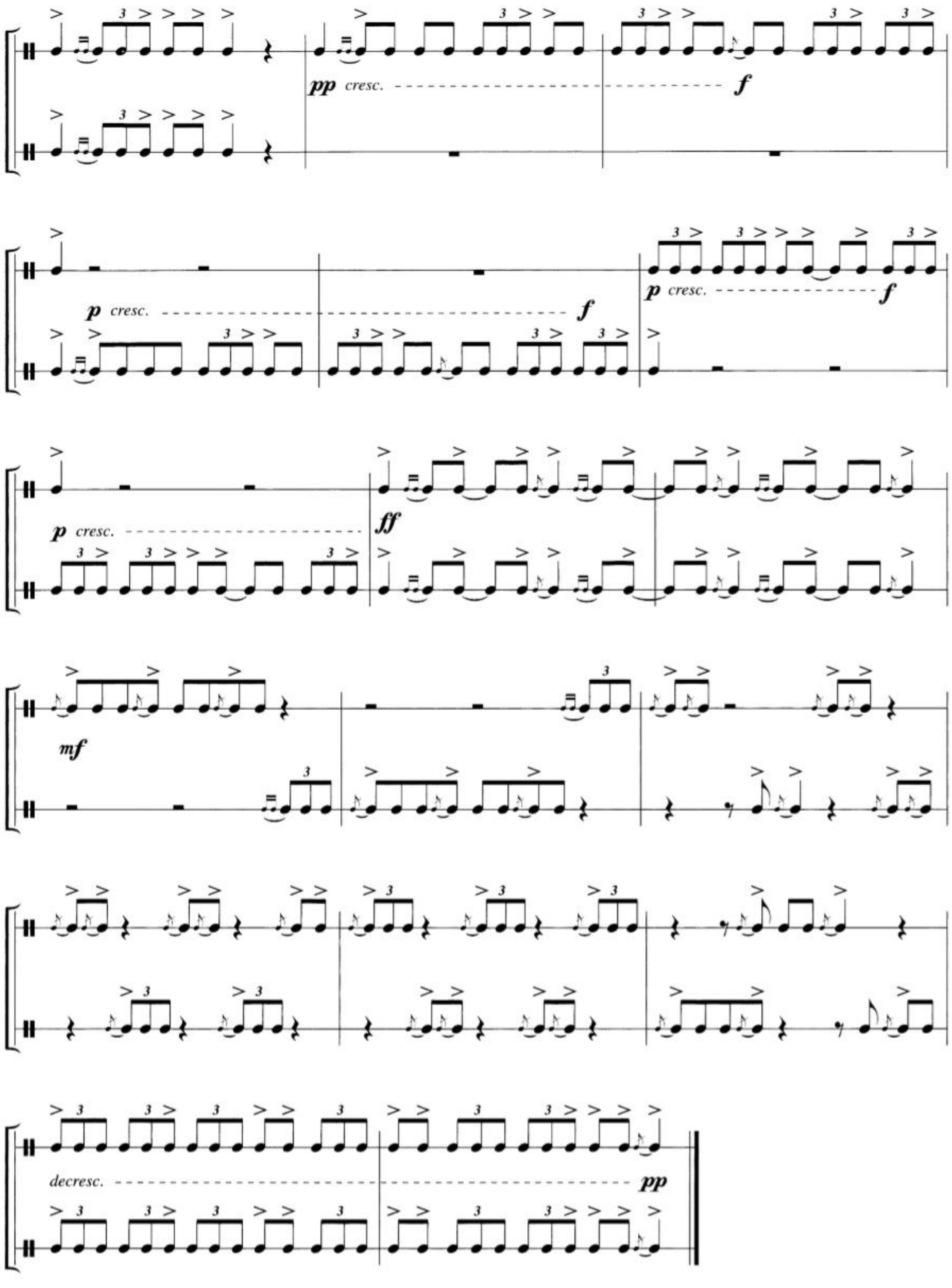
Duet 6

By Ron Spagnardi

As an ongoing tribute to Ron Spagnardi who founded Modern Drummer Publications in 1977 and was an excellent drum teacher and author in his own right, *Modern Drummer* has been including some of the articles, exercises, and pieces that Ron included in his many fine books. This month we will include another snare drum duet ("Duet 6") from Ron's book *Snare Drum Duets: 25 Duets for Two Snare Drummers.* This is a nice intermediate duet in 5/4 that could be played by a teacher and a student, or just two drummers getting together for some rhythmic interplay. It is also a good way to start to feel the odd time signature of 5/4 and develop some vocabulary for the next time you have to take a solo on Dave Brubeck's "Take Five." Enjoy!

Snare Drum Duets
25 Duets for Two Snare Drummers




pp cresc.
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Check out Ron's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Snare Drum Duets* at moderndrummer.com

John DeChristopher

A Life in the Drum Business

By Mark Griffith

John DeChristopher is one of the most respected people in the drum business. He helped create the modern version of artist relations with his work with Simmons Drums, Drum Workshop, and Zildjian. His life in the drum industry parallels the rise of the modern drumming industry. From his early employment at E. U. Wurlitzer Music in Boston in the late 70s, through his retirement from Zildjian in 2013, he has seen it all. Today, the life of his access to great drumming has helped him create and host the popular *Live from My Drum Room* and *TrackTalk* podcasts with guest drummers from Bill Gibson and Stan Lynch to Jeff Watts and Vinnie Colaiuta, and everybody in between. Unfortunately, while he helps us learn about those drumming legends, we never get to learn much about the fascinating drum business personality known affectionately as "Johnny D."

Tom Evans

MD: You have had a long and distinguished career in the music biz, but most people only associate you with Zildjian. However, you had a long career before Zildjian, can we go back and look at your career from the beginning?

JD: My first job was a paper route in 1972, when I was 11. I bought my first pair of drumsticks and my first used Zildjian cymbal with my paper route money. I started working at a music store in 1979 called E. U. Wurlitzer Music in Boston. It was the biggest MI store in Boston at that time. I was playing in my band "Voyager" and like everyone else, I wanted to make it in the music business. I was planning to go to Berklee but decided to take a gap year. Then my friend Fred Gilfeather (aka Freddie G) offered me a job at Wurlitzer and a year turned into four years at Wurlitzer, including being promoted to Drum Department Manager, and I never made it to Berklee. When I look back at it now, I'd say things worked out for the best. Working at Wurlitzer was my steppingstone to the drum industry.

Courtesy of John DeChristopher Library

John and Charilie Watts

I met so many people who were key figures in the drum industry and would later become key figures in my path to working in the business. I met Vic Firth in 1980. I used to order drumsticks directly from him. My wife Kelly (Firth) remembers how people would call the house to place their orders, which is what I did when I worked at Wurlitzer. Vic would deliver the sticks on his way to Boston Symphony Orchestra concerts. Symphony Hall was around the corner from Wurlitzer and Vic would come in wearing his tux, carrying a box of sticks and mallets and say, "I'm not leaving until I get a check." I'd have to battle it out with my store manager to get Vic his check, because he operated on C.O.D. only. He was a smart businessman. I met Armand Zildjian, Lennie DiMuzio, Steve Gadd, Simon Phillips, Peter Erskine, and Tony Williams when we held drum clinics at the shop, and most significantly, in 1982 I met Glyn Thomas of Simmons Drums. He gave me my first job in the industry.

> On the outside, Artist Relations looks very glamorous, but to do the job at the level I did, was a tremendous sacrifice of your personal time and life.

Courtesy of John DeChristopher Library

Hal Blaine and John

MD: Was Glyn the brains behind Simmons?

JD: Glyn was the US distributor. Dave Simmons started Simmons Drums in England, but Glyn Thomas was the person who launched Simmons Drums in America. He moved from London to form Simmons Group Centre, in Calabasas, CA, which is outside of Los Angeles. Wurlitzer bought the first Simmons SDS V in Boston in 1982. The deal was, if we bought this very expensive and revolutionary electronic drum kit, Glyn would come to the store and do a clinic. So Glyn came to Wurlitzer and we hit it off immediately. He put on a great clinic, we sold the kit the next day to the Cars drummer, David Robinson, who was a regular customer, and that began my relationship with Glyn. We started selling lots of Simmons Drums as they took off and I bought a Simmons SDS7 kit personally and would call their office in Calabasas for technical support or to order product. In 1985, I contacted Glyn because I was moving to LA to pursue music and was looking for a job to land on my feet when I got there. He said if you come out here, I'll have a job for you. And he did. Simmons was an incredible group of people, many of whom I consider lifelong friends. In my first month working at Simmons, I met so many drummers who became lifelong friends. Gregg Bissonette, Myron Grombacher, Gerry Brown, Danny Seraphine, John Robinson, Josh Freese and Chad Wackerman to name a few. I'm forever grateful to Glyn for giving me my first break in the business. I'm still in touch with him today.

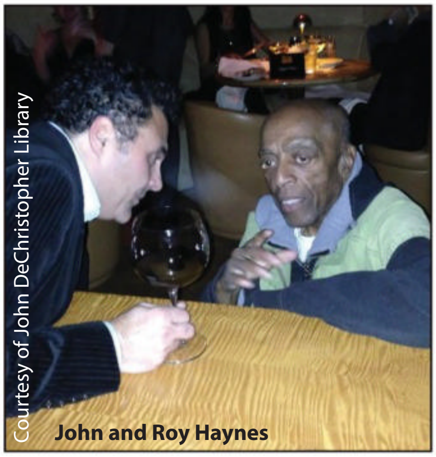
MD: After Simmons, did you go directly to work for Drum Workshop?

JD: Yes, those were the early days of Drum Workshop drums. I met Don Lombardi at a drum clinic in Los Angeles. I remember telling him that I had bought DW's first left-footed double pedal in 1983, and he kind of remembered it. Don is one of the nicest, most humble, unassuming people, and I was honored to meet the man that made these great pedals. I think we met a couple of times. In late summer of 1986, he called me at home one night and said that my name came up, because DW was looking to get into the acoustic drum market. He said (at the time), "Rogers is gone, Slingerland is gone, Gretsch is barely hanging on, Ludwig is barely hanging on, and I think there's an opportunity for an American drum company to compete with the Japanese companies (Yamaha, Pearl and Tama), if it's done *right*." He was looking for someone with Sales and Artist Relations experience and asked if I'd be interested in meeting with him to discuss working there. At that time, things were changing at Simmons due to competition from Roland and Yamaha electronic drums, and by 1986 you were starting to see the return of acoustic drum sets. A year earlier in 1985, it was almost exclusively electronic drums. And at that time, my first wife and I learned we were expecting our first child, so I was looking for stability. After a few more discussions, I accepted an Artist Relations/Sales Manager job at Drum Workshop and started there in November of 1986. The hard part was telling Glyn I was leaving Simmons, but he understood DW was a better opportunity.

LA had lost its luster, so I moved back to the East Coast in late 1988 and opened Drum Workshop's East Coast Sales and Artist Relations office out of my house. DW drums were starting to take off, and I was driving to New York every month to service Manny's, Sam Ash and Long Island Drum Center and writing a lot of business.

MD: How long were you at each of the jobs before Zildjian?

JD: Simmons was a year and four months, DW was two and a half years, then to Zildjian for 24 years.



Courtesy of John DeChristopher Library

John and Roy Haynes

MD: How did working at Zildjian come about?

JD: I was at the NAMM show in January 1989 working for DW and stopped by the Zildjian booth. Colin Schofield, their Marketing Manager at the time, approached me. He said they were looking to expand Artist Relations. Lennie DiMuzio was moving to Education and they were looking for someone with Artist Relations experience, and my name came up. Some of their artists had spoken highly of me. I gave Colin my resume and he called me a week or so later and asked if I'd be interested in coming to Norwell for an interview and to discuss it further. So I did. I had two interviews, including one with Armand Zildjian, Lennie, and Craigie Zildjian. I was definitely interested in the job, it was Zildjian after all, but the starting salary wasn't going to work for me, especially considering the money I would potentially make selling DW Drums, so I was prepared to pass and told them so. On the outside, Artist Relations looks very glamorous, but to do the job at the level I did, was a tremendous sacrifice of your personal time and life. At the same time, I was approached by HSS, who was Sabian's US distributor, about a possible job as their New England Sales Rep. I knew my only leverage in negotiating would be at this early stage, since they had approached me and made it clear they wanted to hire me, and I was prepared to walk away. Ultimately, things worked out and I accepted the position with Zildjian as Artist Relations Manager in May of 1989.

Courtesy of John DeChristopher Library

Peter Erskine, John, and Gregg Bissonette

MD: Those are three groundbreaking companies. What similarities did you see in those three companies?

JD: DW and Zildjian are family businesses. And Simmons was too, to a lesser degree. All three were small companies when I started at each one. What it said on your business card and what you actually did some days could be very different. You wore a lot of hats and that was ok. In each of those companies, I felt like I was contributing something and making an impact. I'm proud of my work at all of them.

MD: Before you (and your artist relations peers) started doing artist relations for DW and Zildjian, were there people doing that before you, did those jobs even really exist?

JD: Until Lennie DiMuzio started in the early 1960s, Zildjian didn't have an official Artist Relations person. Armand certainly interacted with drummers, but he wasn't a drummer at the level Lennie was. I'd say that Artist Relations as we know it today, began with Lennie. In the 60s, Gretsch had a man named Phil Grant. I never had the honor of meeting him but from what I hear, he was he was very good at his job. And the other drum companies had Artist Relations people I believe, but they'll never be anyone like Lennie. I learned a lot just from being around him. The fact that I was only the second person entrusted with Zildjian's Artist Relations program, Lennie being the first, is not lost on me.

MD: I think a lot of people see the title "Artist Relations," and wonder what that really means. How did you develop and define the job of Artist Relations while you were at Zildjian?

JD: It was about always servicing and supporting the artists. Peter Erskine, Steve Gadd, Dennis Chambers, Steve Smith, Mike Mangini, the list goes on, knew they could depend on me. My job was advocating for the artists but at the same time I had a fiscal responsibility to Zildjian. Artist Relations is being all things to all people. Advocating for the artists and promoting the company.

I didn't hesitate to go to Zildjian and say, "We should put Steve Gadd on a tour bus across the country for a clinic tour. We'll call it "Mission From Gadd." It's going to cost x dollars and we might not break even, but it's something that's never been done before. It will raise the bar for clinics and promotional events and attract thousands of customers." It was such a huge success, we did three Mission From Gadd Tours in the US and two throughout Europe. Besides servicing and supporting artists, I was always looking for new and unique ways to combine the strength of our artist roster, with promoting the Zildjian brand.

I also developed the concept of "Artist Sessions" in the early 2000s, in Los Angeles, New York, London, Nashville and in key European markets. I'm happy to see Zildjian is still doing them today. I also produced the Zildjian Drummers Achievement Awards in 2003, honoring Steve Gadd and Armand Zildjian, and in 2008 in London honoring Ginger Baker.

Of course, part of the job was signing the newest and hottest drummers as artists and I'm proud of all the artists I signed during my tenure. I'll just add that one of the things I'm most proud of is connecting Zildjian with Charlie Watts, Ringo Starr, Hal Blaine, Levon Helm, and Max Weinberg. None of them had a relationship with Zildjian before me, and I nurtured those relationships over the years.

Dennis Chambers, Steve Smith, Vinnie Colaiuta, and John

Courtesy of John DeChristopher Library

MD: And ironically, as drummers that's what we do as musicians. We play for the band and the song, while we also look out for a lot of the "inside stuff" that is all very important. The groove, the feel, the tempo, dynamics, arrangements… These are all things that live within the music, just like the things that you did live within the business. They are things that aren't seen or heard, but they are definitely felt. We're talking about nuance.

JD: Mark, that is very well put! I couldn't agree more.

MD: What did playing music and playing drums teach you for the future.

JD: Everything I've achieved in my music industry career started with playing the drums. From the age of 11 until my mid 20s, my entire world revolved around the drums. It's all I wanted to do. I joined my first band, "Undun" when I was 13 and by 14, I joined "Trigger" and was playing semi-professionally. We were a good little band. What I didn't know at the time, but know now, is playing music taught me how to work with people, compromise, get along and work as a team, and be professional and respectful. All important things in music and in life. It wasn't until I started working at Simmons that I realized I could have a career in the Drum Industry. Ironically, I moved to LA to become a pro drummer and after being there for a year or so, shifted my focus to a career in the Drum Industry.

Gretsch
Auralex
Courtesy of John DeChristopher Library

MD: The more I teach (and talk to) people about drums and music, the more that I see that drums and music teach us all (young and old) some very important life lessons. From teenage musicians, through young adults, to corporate and professional people. Everyone can learn from the role of the drums within music.

JD: That's really interesting. I've never thought about it that way, but you're absolutely right. Drums connect many things.

MD: Why did you wind up leaving Zildjian as an AR person?

JD: One of the things that comes with working somewhere for a long time is having a perspective on how you used to do things, and how you do things now. To that end, I felt I could no longer do my best work. I was part of the golden era of the Drum Industry, and I had a great run. Leaving Zildjian was one of the hardest decisions I've ever made. I loved my job and wanted to do it at the highest level, but the business was changing, and I felt frustrated with things that were beyond my control, and I knew I could no longer do my best work. After 24 great years, I felt it was time to ride off into the sunset. But I'm very proud of my career and legacy with Zildjian and I can look back with only the fondest memories of my time there. Armand, Craigie, and Debbie Zildjian will always have a special place in my heart. They're celebrating their 400th anniversary this year and I'm proud to be part of their history.

Steve Gadd, John, and Rick Marotta

Courtesy of John DeChristopher Library

MD: You were so close to many of the people that created the drum business. They, and the many drummers that came before us, created the brotherhood and sisterhood that make up our "tribe." You are a vital link to that original generation that created the drum business. I was wondering if we could talk about a few of them. Let's start with Vic Firth. Amazingly, there is a generation of drummers that don't even know he was an actual person, not to mention a world class musician, and not just a brand of sticks.

JD: Talk about a success story. Vic Firth was the greatest timpanist in the world, played with the Boston Symphony Orchestra for over 50 years, taught at New England Conservatory, and started making drumsticks in his basement. His two daughters and his wife were part of the business, with the entire family doing everything from pairing the sticks, to making the mallets, to keeping the books, to wrapping and shipping the orders. I remember during one of his deliveries to Wurlitzer in 1981 he had a pair of American Classic 5A wood tip sticks and said, "Try these out and tell me what you think." His sticks immediately felt perfectly balanced and weighted with each other. The wood felt heavier and more solid. I got several gigs out of them and I played pretty hard back then. I remember everything happening quickly after that, to the point where we couldn't get enough of them. Fast forward to signing Steve Gadd and Peter Erskine as signature artists and taking the brand to another level. To me, Vic was like Avedis and Armand Zildjian. Technology, innovation, foresight and just a great instinct for the business. Vic would have been the first one to say he knew nothing about business, but so much of his success as a drumstick maker came from being the incredible musician he was. Truly legendary.

> I'll just add that one of the things I'm most proud of is connecting Zildjian with Charlie Watts, Ringo Starr, Hal Blaine, Levon Helm, and Max Weinberg.

MD: There is yet another example of taking everything you learn through playing music to the highest level and applying that knowledge to business.

JD: What you'll learn through studying any great musician whether it's Vic Firth, Steve Gadd, or Peter Erskine is, there's no cutting corners. it's all about getting the best end result.

MD: Tell us about Armand Zildjian and Lennie DiMuzio?

JD: Both Armand and Lennie were giants in the industry. If you were lucky enough to work in the Drum Industry when these legends walked the earth, like me, then you know what I'm talking about. They were great mentors and role models, not just for me, but for everyone who worked at Zildjian and in the Drum Industry. They knew the cymbal business better than anyone I've ever known. Armand was everything you've ever heard about him: kind, charming, funny, mischievous, generous, intelligent… Lennie was much the same, which is why they were so close. I'm so grateful for all the time I got to spend with both of them. Even after Lennie left Zildjian in 2003, we remained close friends until he passed in 2015.

MD: How about Don Lombardi and John Good?

JD: I love and respect them both so much. Chris Lombardi too. Don and I stay in regular contact. John and I were very close during the time I worked at DW because it was just Don, John and myself in the beginning. Don's son Chris came in about a year or so later when he graduated from high school. Chris started off working for me in sales, I'm so proud of what Chris has done running the company. John Good is every bit

> In each of those companies, I felt like I was contributing something and making an impact. I'm proud of my work at all of them.

as passionate and focused about the drums today as he was back then. He had a vision of what he wanted DW drums to be. John is a funny guy, but very passionate and focused. Initially, I handled Artist Relations, and John was making drums. Eventually, as things grew, John became more of the face of the artist side of the business. Don has a great sense of humor. One of the funniest things Don says, even to this day, if he's talking with someone I don't know, he'll introduce me and say, "This is John DeChristopher, he used to work for me in the early days of Drum Workshop, and the best thing John ever did was leave, because as soon as he left, our business went through the roof!"

I'm immensely proud of the work I did with all these companies, and what they were able to accomplish while I was there. And in DW's case, after I left!

MD: Did you know ProMark founder Herb Brochstein?

JD: Yes, I knew Herb, and his son Maury. When I started at Zildjian in 1989 and until 1996, I was the drumstick product marketing manager, so we were competitors. We were friendly competitors for the most part, and I had immense respect for the business that he built. We would always say hello at trade shows.

MD: Did you know the Calato family of Regal Tip?

JD: I don't know Joe well. By the time I got into the business, his daughters Carol and Cathy were very involved. But I've spoken with Joe many times over the years. I still keep in touch with Carol and Cathy. Wonderful people.

MD: How about Hagi from Yamaha?

JD: I have immense respect for what Hagi did in putting Yamaha Drums on the map. Greg Crane, their US Artist Relations Manager, does a great job, and Danny-san in Japan. But Hagi got it started. I know they made drums in the 60s, but I don't think Hagi was involved at that time. When Yamaha exploded on the scene with their Recording Custom drums, it was Hagi collaborating with Steve Gadd, Rick Marotta, and other drummers. Recording Customs turned the drum industry on its ear. There was a time when EVERYBODY played those drums! Steve Gadd, Rick Marotta, Peter Erskine, Vinnie Colaiuta, John Robinson… Steve Gadd tells a great story about how he went to Japan in the 70s and Hagi supplied drums for him, and that was the beginning of their relationship. Steve said to Hagi "My friend Rick Marotta is coming to Japan in a couple of weeks, and he'll need drums too" and Hagi said, "OK I'll have drums for him too." When Steve got back, he called Rick and said, "The tour was great, and by the way we're both endorsing Yamaha drums now."

Courtesy of John DeChristopher Library

Louie Bellson and John

Courtesy of John DeChristopher Library

Carter Beauford and John

MD: Did you have any relationship with any of the Paiste family?

JD: I know Erik and Kelly Paiste, I knew all the artist relations people back in the day. Rich Mangicaro and I met in the 80s and have been friends ever since. I knew Andrew Shreve when he took over after Rich left. Great guys. I didn't know Robert or Toomas Paiste, though I'm sure I met them at some point. I have great respect for Paiste. I think they have always made great instruments.

MD: What about Bill Ludwig II?

JD: "The Chief!" I'm closer with Bill III (his son) because we're the same generation. I met Bill Ludwig Jr. several times at trade shows and wish I got a picture with him. When you think of Ringo and the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show on February 9, 1964, you can't help but think of Ludwig drums and their rich history.

MD: Tell me about the legendary Roy Burns.

JD: Everyone knew Roy as a famous drummer and had seen him in the Rogers catalogs. I met him in the in the late 70s or early 80s when he did a clinic at Wurlitzer, and he was starting Aquarian drumheads and his cymbal springs. He would call the shop and say, "Hey it's Roy Burns!" Years later, working in the industry, I'd always say hello to him at NAMM shows. He always had a new joke to tell. Another legend.

MD: How about Remo? That's someone else that an entire generation doesn't know that is an actual person. "Remo" was a person named Remo Belli.

JD: Another visionary. Remo had this crazy idea of making a plastic drumhead. Talk about a game-changer. I mean, think about what Remo did for the Drum Industry. He was a great drummer himself, and an incredible businessman. I'm glad I got to know him. The last time I saw him was at PASIC a few months before he passed and a few years after I'd retired from Zildjian, and he asked me if I was bored and when I was coming back to work in the drum business.

MD: I'd be remiss if I didn't ask you about Ron Spagnardi?

JD: The great Ron Spagnardi. He was another one of "founding fathers of the drum industry." The man who created *Modern Drummer* magazine. Ron was a great guy and real people person; I can't think of Ron without thinking about the MD Festival. I can picture him sitting at the bar of the Radisson Fairfield Hotel, where we all stayed for Modern Drummer's Festival Weekend. Friday night, he'd be buying drinks for everyone and holding court. And then on Sunday night, after the MD Festival, Ron and Isabel would host the industry people and artists at an incredible banquet. He'd say to me, "C'mon John, you're Italian. Eat!"

MD: I know that you are a big Gretsch guy. Tell me about Fred and Dinah Gretsch.

JD: My relationship with Fred and Dinah began in the early 90s when Tony Williams was still playing Gretsch. It evolved into a great friendship in the late 90s when Vinnie started playing Gretsch. They invited me to the factory for a photoshoot with Vinnie in 1998 and that's when I met Paul Cooper, who's in charge of their drum manufacturing. I consider them dear friends and it's no secret how much I love their drums.

Other than the original American drum companies like Rogers and Slingerland, I feel fortunate to have some connection with all the founding fathers of the drum industry, in some way. I feel fortunate to have worked in the business when I did. It really was the golden era of the drum industry, and thankfully many of these people are still around.

One of the reasons I started my podcast *Live From My Drum Room* in 2020, was to document these important people now, while we're all still here. Drummers, industry people and friends.

MD: Let's talk about your playing and some of your vintage gear?

JD: I don't know about talking about my playing, but let's talk about my vintage drums. In 2005, I went on a quest to find a Gretsch kit like the one my dad bought me in 1974. I had traded it for a Simmons kit in the early 1980s and of course regretted it. So, I found a vintage Gretsch stop sign badge kit in Gold Chrome and Paul Cooper at Gretsch was nice enough to rewrap it in Midnight Blue Pearl. It looks exactly like the Gretsch kit my dad bought me in 1974. And that was the beginning of me getting the vintage bug. I was still working for Zildjian at the time and kept the drums in my office and would tap on them from time to time, but I wasn't really playing drums.

When I left Zildjian in 2013, I started playing again and it was like I was 11 again, discovering the instrument all over again. I had a new-found love and passion for the drums, and part of that was seeking out vintage drums. Now I have eight vintage Gretsch sets. Then I started branching out into other vintage drums like Rogers, Hayman, Premier, Ajax, Kent, a couple of vintage MIJ Stencil kits, and I recently bought a Camco set. I think I'm up to 16 kits. I rotate them and use different kits for gigs.

I'm sure Charlie Watts had something to do with it. His influence of liking old gear rubbed off on me. Whenever we talked about vintage drums, he'd say, "I like the way they made things back then." I know the drum companies of today make excellent, high-quality drums. I'm under no illusion that it's really about nostalgia. Vintage drums remind me of a special period of my life. I even use vintage hardware.

MD: I'm not a collector, but I saw a special on a vintage book collector recently, and he said that he's having fun being a caretaker of all these vintage books until it's time to let someone else be a caretaker of them for a while. That hit me, for the first time I understood the vintage collector thing.

> Vic Firth was the greatest timpanist in the world, played with the Boston Symphony Orchestra for over 50 years, taught at New England Conservatory, and started making drumsticks in his basement.

> …playing music taught me how to work with people, compromise, get along and work as a team, and be professional and respectful. All important things in music and in life.

JD: I feel the same way. My 36-year-old son plays drums, and both of my grandchildren play, so I have enough drums for each of them when they're ready, and I know that someday my collection will go to a good home.

MD: I watched your podcast on your cymbal collection and I was *very surprised*.

JD: You would think that having worked at Zildjian for 24 years, I'd have a huge collection, but I wasn't playing drums for a lot of that time, so I never got cymbals. I wish I had! But I have more than I realized, and I skipped over a lot of stuff in my podcast. I was at Paul Francis' house a couple of weeks ago and he said, "You have more Paiste's than I thought." I started collecting vintage Paiste Giant

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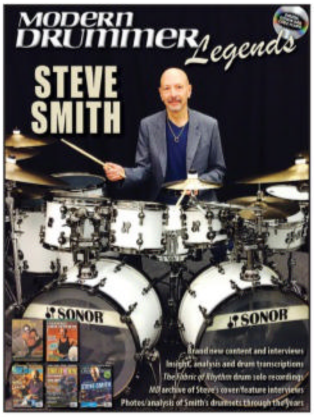
The *Legends* Collection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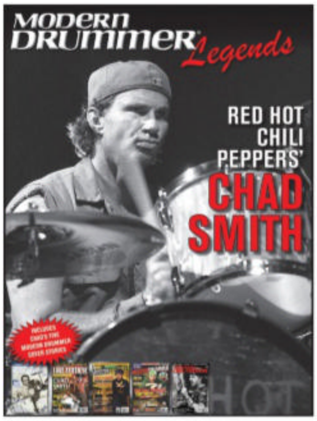
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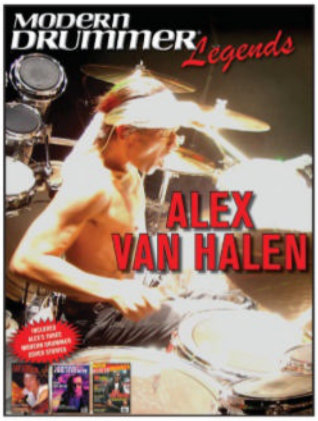
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Beat's because they're very unique. I also have some original Istanbul K's and vintage A Zildjians too. I'm partial to old A Zildjians. I still think if you find the right ones, they're the most versatile cymbals.
MD: Are you a snare drum guy at all?
JD: I'm becoming one, whether I want to or not. As of right now, I have about 30 snare drums. Almost all are vintage, and some are very rare and collectable. I have 10 Gretsch snare drums, wood and brass shells, including a 24-karat gold plated snare they offered 50 years ago. I dreamed of owning one and finally found one in 2019. I have three or four Ludwig snares, two Rogers Powertone snares (a wood and brass shell), two Premier snares, a Slingerland Artist Model, a Dresden and a Sonor that Vic gave me, a Leedy, and some others. I tend to gravitate toward the same ones for gigs.
MD: How's your band Grand Theft Audio going?
JD: It's great to be playing drums in a band again. We play Classic Rock, Beatles, Stones, Who, Tom Petty… I didn't realize how much I missed playing out until I joined this band. I've known a couple of my bandmates for almost 50 years.
MD: What drummers did you come up listening to?
JD: Charlie Watts, Ringo Starr, John Bonham, Keith Moon, Danny Seraphine and Hal Blaine had the most influence on me when I started playing in 1972. I was listening to my sister's Stones albums. Listening to *Exile On Main Street* and other records, made me want to play the drums. When I was 15 or 16, it was Mitch Mitchell, Butch and Jaimoe from The Allman Brothers, Gary Mallaber with Steve Miller and of course, Jeff Porcaro. In my late teens I got hip to Steve Gadd, Billy Cobham, and Tony Williams. In my 20s, I was really into Terry Bozzio, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Steve Smith. I saw Terry with Missing Persons in 1983 and it was lifechanging. At one point, I had a full Roto Tom kit like Terry. I still love him.

When I started playing again in 2013, I came full circle back to the drummers that first influenced me when I started playing. I can listen to Charlie, Ringo, John Bonham, and Keith Moon all day and find new ways to appreciate them.
MD: Let's conclude with some advice to anyone who wants to get into the drum business.
JD: If I had a dime for every time someone asked me that, I could retire! The drum business has changed a lot from when I got into it almost 40 years ago. From manufacturing, to supply chain and distribution, to how companies market and sell their products, to Artist Relations and product endorsements, to how consumers make purchasing decisions. The industry is shrinking, not growing and it's a crowded and highly competitive market.

Having said all that, my advice is get a business degree and or some sales experience. I was fortunate to get into the business at a time when being a drummer and having sales experience was enough, but in most instances, that's no longer the case. If you get a job in the drum business be honest, be humble, and work hard. The rest will take care of itself.

Check out John's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

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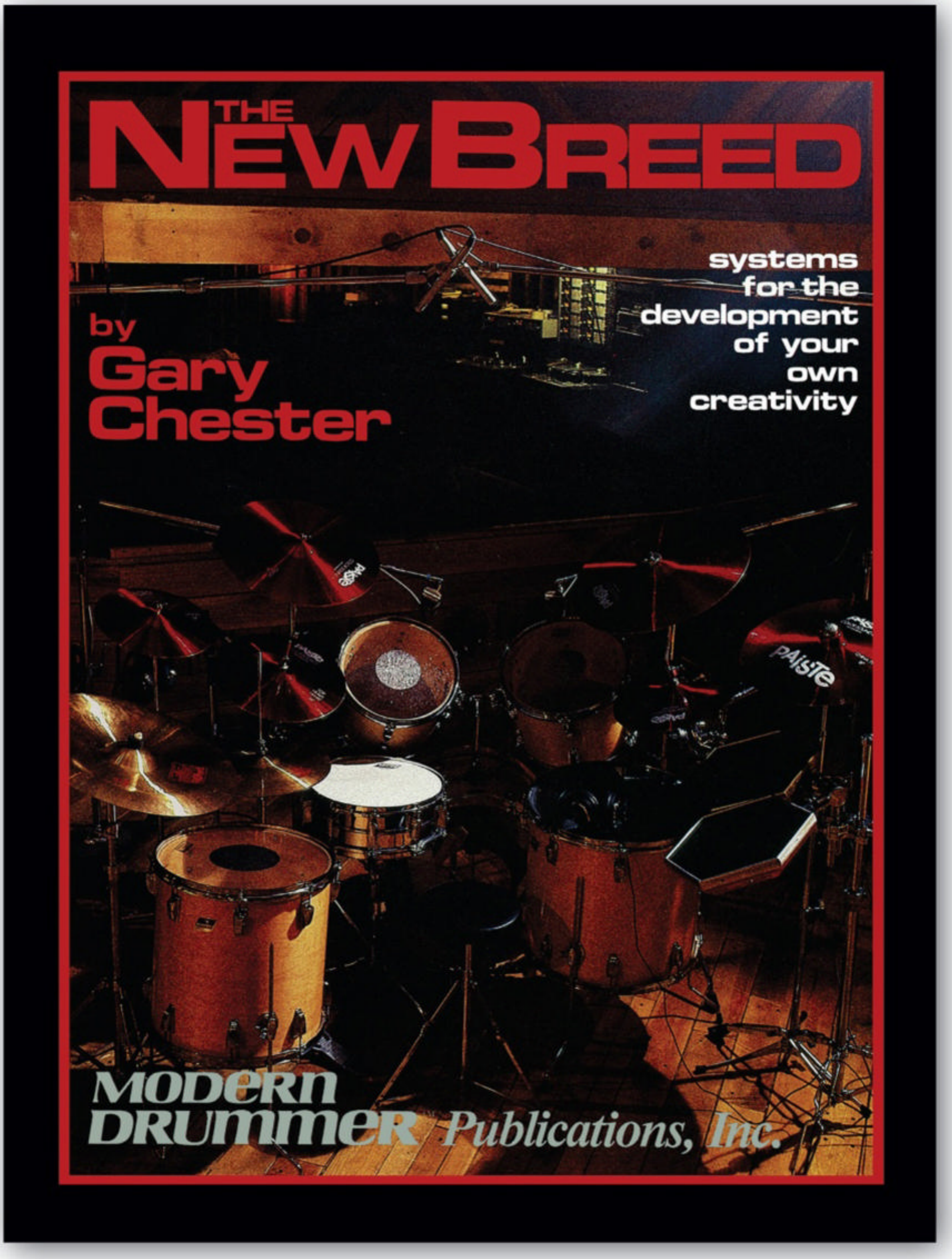
MODERN DRUMMER

Gary Chester's New Breed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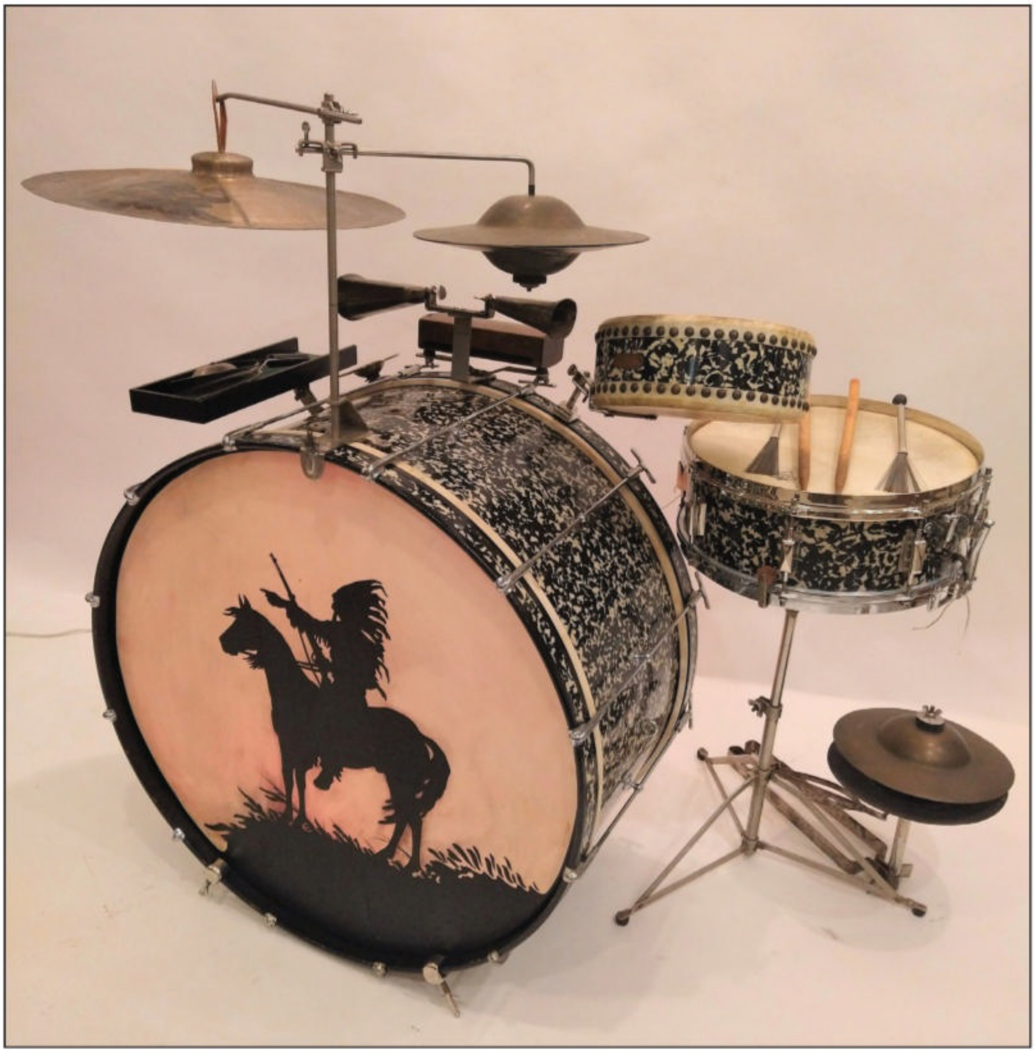
Walter G. Howe's 1930's Leedy Black Onyx Trap Set with Sentinel Silhouette Head

By Tim Northup



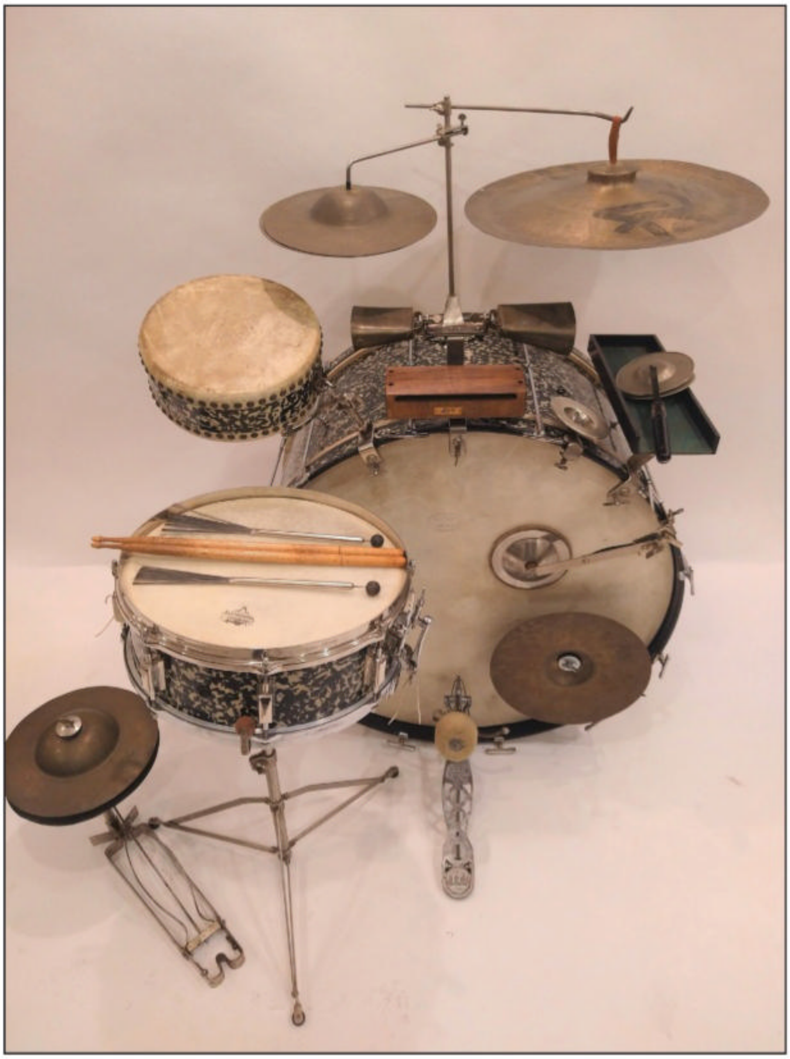
Northup Drums Museum is proud to present a time capsule drum kit that has everything including star power from the 1930's! Let's learn about this beautiful kit and it's famous owner.

Walter G. Howe of Boston, Massachusetts was a Leedy Drum Artist with strong ties to the music scene throughout New England. Walter was a graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music where he played with the well know Conservatory Orchestra. Later on, he played under Arthur Fiedler at the popular McDowell Club. He also played for two summers at the Fabyan House hotel in the state of New Hampshire. As he became a more accomplished percussionist, he joined the WBZ Studio Band at the famous Hotel Bradford on Tremont Street in Boston, under the direction of Oscar Elgart. After this stint, Howe joined E.R.A. Orchestra under William Dodge. During this time, there wasn't a band who didn't want Walter as their drummer. He was very popular and always showed up with his Leedy Black Onyx bass drum with factory oil painted Indian on a horseback head (Sentinel Silhouette), Black Onyx Dual snare and matching tom, as well as a variety of traps, Chinese temple blocks, etc.

Walter is also included on the famous Leedy pyralin wrap introduced in 1941 called "Autograph of the Stars". It featured the autographs of 212 Leedy endorsers and remains one of the rarest drum finishes of all times.

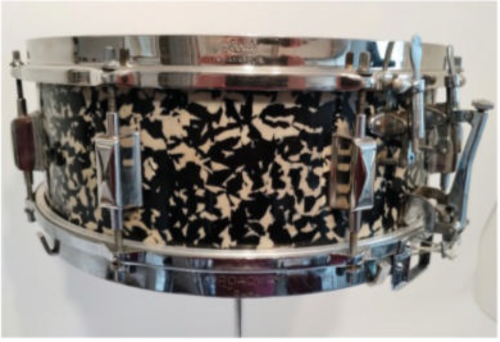
In June 1998, avid percussionist and notable vintage drum collector Stephen M. Hillman of Boston, Massachusetts was able to acquire this trap set from Walter's relatives. The set was in excellent condition. Northup Drums Museum was able to acquire this rare set from the Hillman family this last year after Stephen's passing. The provenance stated here was provided by the family. The set is shown with Walter playing it in a 1933 copy of Leedy Topics, issue 24. This was a monthly newsletter of the time put out by the Leedy drum company.

The newsletter shows Walter playing this kit with some added accessories, a full trap table and



temple blocks. Drummers changed out some of their accessories as time went on, or just for playing different styles of music.

We are showing it with some different accessories from the period, but the main part of the set remains the same. Leedy 14x28 Black Onyx Standard Bass Drum with red and blue blinking light kit inside, and the original oil painted "Sentinel Silhouette" head design (1928-35). The snare drum is a Leedy first generation Broadway Dual 5x14 in Black Onyx. The Dual mechanism is similar to the Ludwig Super Sensitive snare drum, having two sets of snares, one on the outside bottom and another set inside the top of the batter head, giving you a very crisp snare sound when both are engaged. The traps and accessories on the bass drum include a matching Leedy Black Onyx Chinese style tack head tom with Leedy tom holder. We see a Leedy professional bass drum pedal with cymbal clanger and mounted cymbal and a Rare #303 heavy duty dual cymbal holder holding large 17" Chinese cymbal and 10" Charleston deep cup cymbals, and a 4" Greeko cymbal. Pictured are a Leedy woodblock and two cowbell holder and a rare Leedy Stick tray which was used for holding sticks, brushes, and small traps. There is also a Leedy Bocka-da-bock on the stick tray. Finally, we have a Leedy lowboy sock cymbal pedal with 10" Leedy cymbals.



What is wonderful about this set is the Black Onyx pyralin wrap remains in near mint condition. It is still crisp, bright, and white; where many have yellowed over time. If you would like to learn more about this famous kit and even play this kit, take a trip the Northup Drums Museum and visit us at **www.northupdrums.com**

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Walter G. Howe

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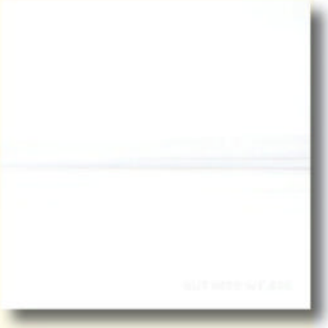
Leedy Drum Topics Issue 24

OUT NOW!

Modern Drummer is spotlighting certain new recordings that have the drums at the center of their sound. These recordings might be drummer-led, or just include a high-quality, special, or unique drumming and musical performance from the drummer and/or musicians in the band. This column will not be restricted to only recordings, we will also be spotlighting new books and DVD's that are being released. We encourage our readers to listen to the recordings that inspire them and keep looking for new musical avenues to explore. You'll never know what new music you might find inspiring! Listen and learn.

Foo Fighters

But Here We Are
RCA Records
Dave Grohl drums



The long awaited and bittersweet new Foo Fighters CD has arrived. As expected, lyrically, you can hear that Dave Grohl (and the band) have been hurting, how could they not? Musically, this is a slightly harder edged Foos record. Drum wise, Dave Grohl (and the rest of the band) are grooving hard. Grohl's drumming is ferocious, in the pocket, and the songs are classic Foo Fighters. The drive, the energy, and the power of the Foo Fighters is a welcome breath of pure rock and roll.

Todd Cochran

Then and Again, Here and Now
Sunnyside Records
Michael Carvin drums

JOHN LEFTWICH / MICHAEL CARVIN
Then and Again, Here and Now
TODD COCHRAN
TC3

The trio of pianist Todd Cochran, bassist John Leftwich, and Michael Carvin began while Cochran and Carvin were playing with Bobby Hutcherson, and Cochran and Leftwich were playing with Freddie Hubbard; And that's how this record sounds. There is a deep history between the musicians here. Don't let the standard repertoire fool you, this trio is painting very unique music on the canvas that the standards provide. In the drum world, Carvin is a legendary teacher, but unfortunately, he doesn't appear on enough recordings. His musical scope is wide, and his explorative drumming is grounded in the jazz drumming tradition. Listen to Carvin's bombastic entrance and melodic solo on "I Got Rhythm," his relaxed swing on "The Duke," and his textural solo on "Invitation." The whole band really shines on Hutcherson's "Little B's Poem."

Joe Lovano

Trio Tapestry
Carmen Castaldi drums
ECM

ECM
Joe Lovano
Trio Tapestry
Marilyn Crispell
Carmen Castaldi
Our Daily Bread

For fans of Joe Lovano's work with the Paul Motian Trio, Trio Tapestry will be a welcome musical addition to the library. Lovano's new trio is gelling nicely and is finding their way within the ECM aesthetic. Castaldi's gentle touch on the drums, pairs well with Marilyn Crispell's piano to create a spacious bed for Lovano to float above. The bassless instrumentation allows the trio to find and explore new paths within the music. Lovano's sense of exploration is alive and well.

Darren Johnson

Wild Awake
Ches Smith drums
Diskonife

DISKONIFE
DARREN JOHNSTON WILD AWAKE

Trumpeter Darren Johnson called the right drummer for the job. Drummer Ches Smith interprets Johnson's playful music with perfection. Smith is not a minimalist nor a basher, and he is neither a newcomer nor a seasoned veteran. I hear his approach as some kind of amalgam of Ed Blackwell and Joey Baron. He weaves polyrhythmic patterns within the music with a nice touch and an earthy sound. Smith leaves space for the other musicians and occupies the space that Johnson's compositions need him to occupy. Listen to Smith and bassist Sean Conly twist around each other while never stepping on each other toes. The song "Wild Awake" is this band hitting full stride.

Leon Lee Dorsey

Cantaloupe Island
Mike Clarke drums
JazzAvenue Records

LEON LEE DORSEY
RUSSELL MALONE MIKE CLARK
CANTALOUPE ISLAND

The legendary Mike Clarke is one of the most conversational drummers alive. His musical conversations can change and combine subjects at the drop of a hat. Mike can take a song into a gutbucket soulful romp, a butt-shakin' funky stroll, a wide-open broken swing, or a "where is one" head-shaking fusion of all of the above. With bassist Leon Lee Dorsey, Clarke has found a rhythm section teammate that can definitely follow the conversation. Together with guitarist Russell Malone this trio stretches the beat, swings you into bad health, and just makes you smile. Whether Clarke's conversations are with himself and inside of the groove, or with the other musicians in the trio, what he's saying is always worth listening to.

Tony Allen and Adrian Lounge

18
Tony Allen drums
Jazz is Dead

ADRIAN YOUNGE
18
TONY ALLEN
JAZZ IS DEAD

While I hate the name of this label, I LOVE this new record. The legendary drummer Tony Allen (of Fela Kuti fame) is not talked about as much as he should be. A big thanks to Adrian Younge for putting Allen's unique sense of groove on record for one last time. This must have been one of Allen's last recordings, but he sounds more alive than ever! If you haven't checked out Allen's one-of-a-kind sense of groove, this is a great place to start. The horn section snakes around Tony's drumming with a unique sense of loose tightness (or maybe tight looseness.) This music is fertile ground for creative sampling and expressive dancing.

Orrin Evans

The Red Door
Marvin "Smitty" Smith and Gene Jackson (2 tracks) drums
Smoke Sessions

SMOKE SESSIONS RECORDS
special guests
Jazzmeia Horn
Sy Smith
Alita Moses
Wallace Roney
Larry McKenna
Buster Williams
Gene Jackson
ORRIN EVANS
NICHOLAS PAYTON
GARY THOMAS
ROBERT HURST
MARVIN "SMITTY" SMITH
The Red Door

Pianist Orrin Evans has tapped two of the most popular jazz drummers from the late 80s and early 90s to light the fuse on his new record. "Smitty" hasn't recorded much since he played drums on the *Tonight Show* in Kevin Eubanks' band, and the last I heard Philadelphian Gene Jackson had been spending a great deal of time in Japan. Thankfully, Evans called them both, and they definitely answered the call. To hear the rhythm section of Evans, Smitty, and Robert Hurst mixing it up with saxophonist Gary Thomas and trumpeter Nicholas Payton on "The Red Door," "Big Small," and "Feed the Fire" will inspire anyone to look behind *The Red Door*.

Jeremy Dutton

Anyone is Better Than Here
Jeremy Dutton drums
Self Produced

Jeremy Dutton
ANYONE IS BETTER THAN HERE

What kind of drumming secret is in the water in Houston Texas? Sebastian Whittaker, Chris Dave, Eric Harland, Kendrick Scott, and now Jeremy Dutton. Since Jeremy came to New York City he has worked with Vijay Iyer and Gerald Clayton, and now he has made his debut as a bandleader. He composed all of the music on *Anyone is Better Than Here* and played some ridiculous drums. His style shows his place in the lineage of the Houston jazz drummers named above. Dutton plays with a broken and jagged timeflow, has a funky underpinning to (almost) everything he plays, and he writes dense music that still has a sense of space. His chosen instrumentation and orchestration works well and features trumpeter Ambrose Akinmushire, saxophonist Ben Wendel, pianist James Francies, bassist Matt Brewer, among others.

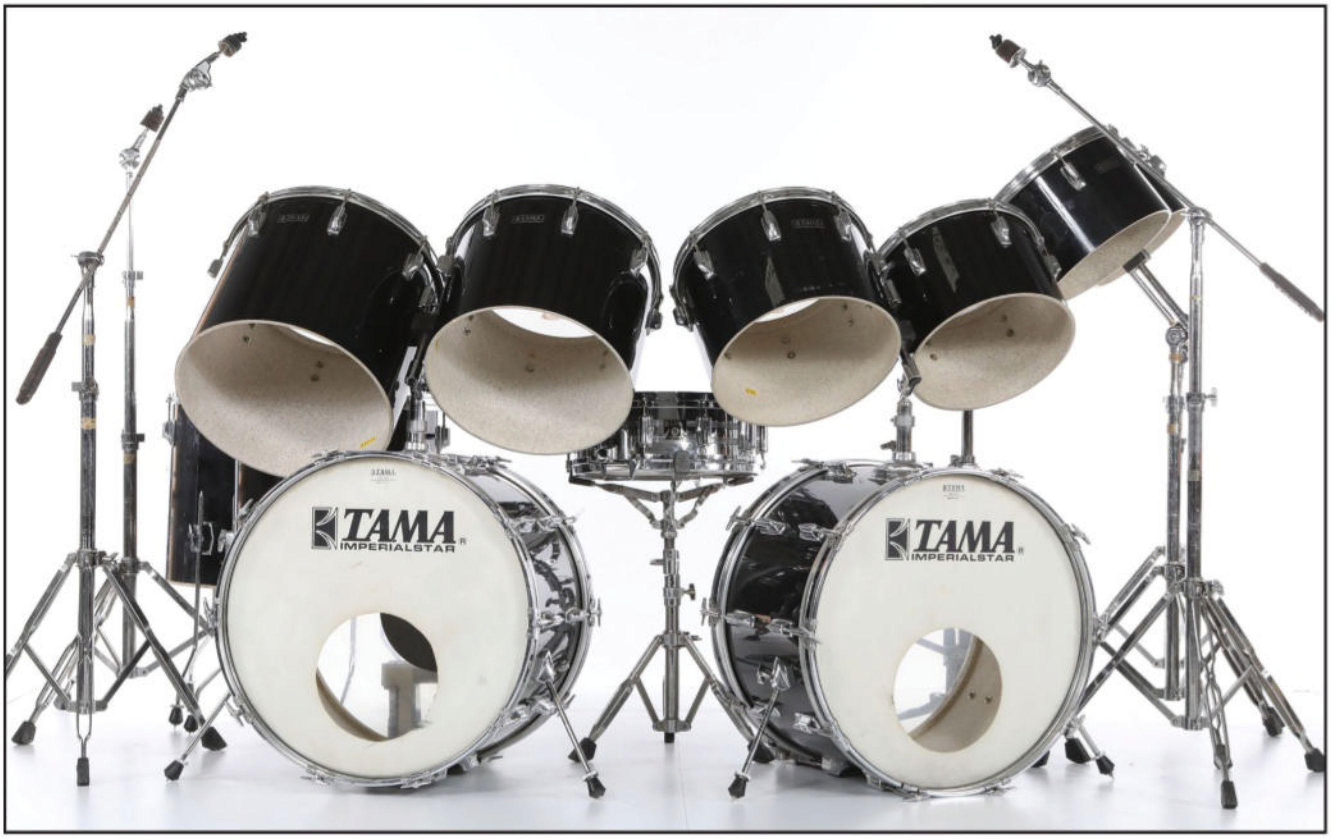
DG'z Notebook: My Path To The Groove – Ideas From a Beat Collector

David Garibaldi
Hudson Music

DG'z NOTEBOOK

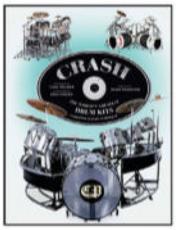
He's back (actually he never left.) The legendary mad professor of drumming has returned with a new tome of creativity for those of us who have *finally* worked through the excellent (and butt kicking) *Future Sounds* (and even for those of us that haven't gotten "there" yet.) David Garibaldi is one of the most inspirational, hardworking, and groundbreaking drumming educators alive. His teaching materials push our boundaries, his organizational skills teach us *how* to learn, and his presentations are always mind opening, clear, and thorough. *DG'z Notebook* is no different! In this book, David invites us into his practice room, his personal notebooks, and his mind. He shows us (by example) how he learns and invites us into his creative and learning process. He even offers an update from his favorite section of *Future Sounds*. We join David as he continues to build his voice, his musical understanding, and gets closer to his creative goals. This is a journey worth taking.

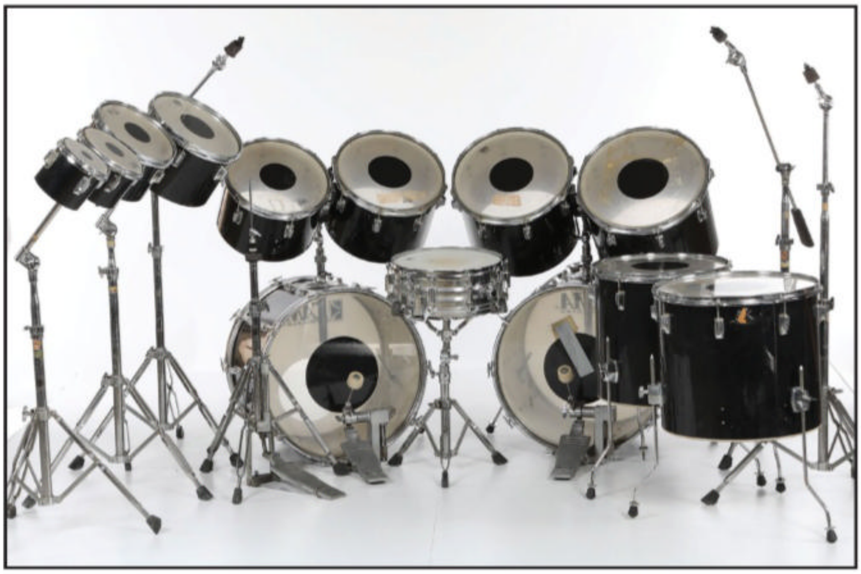
Gil Moore's 1970s Tama Imperialstar Triumph Tour Kit

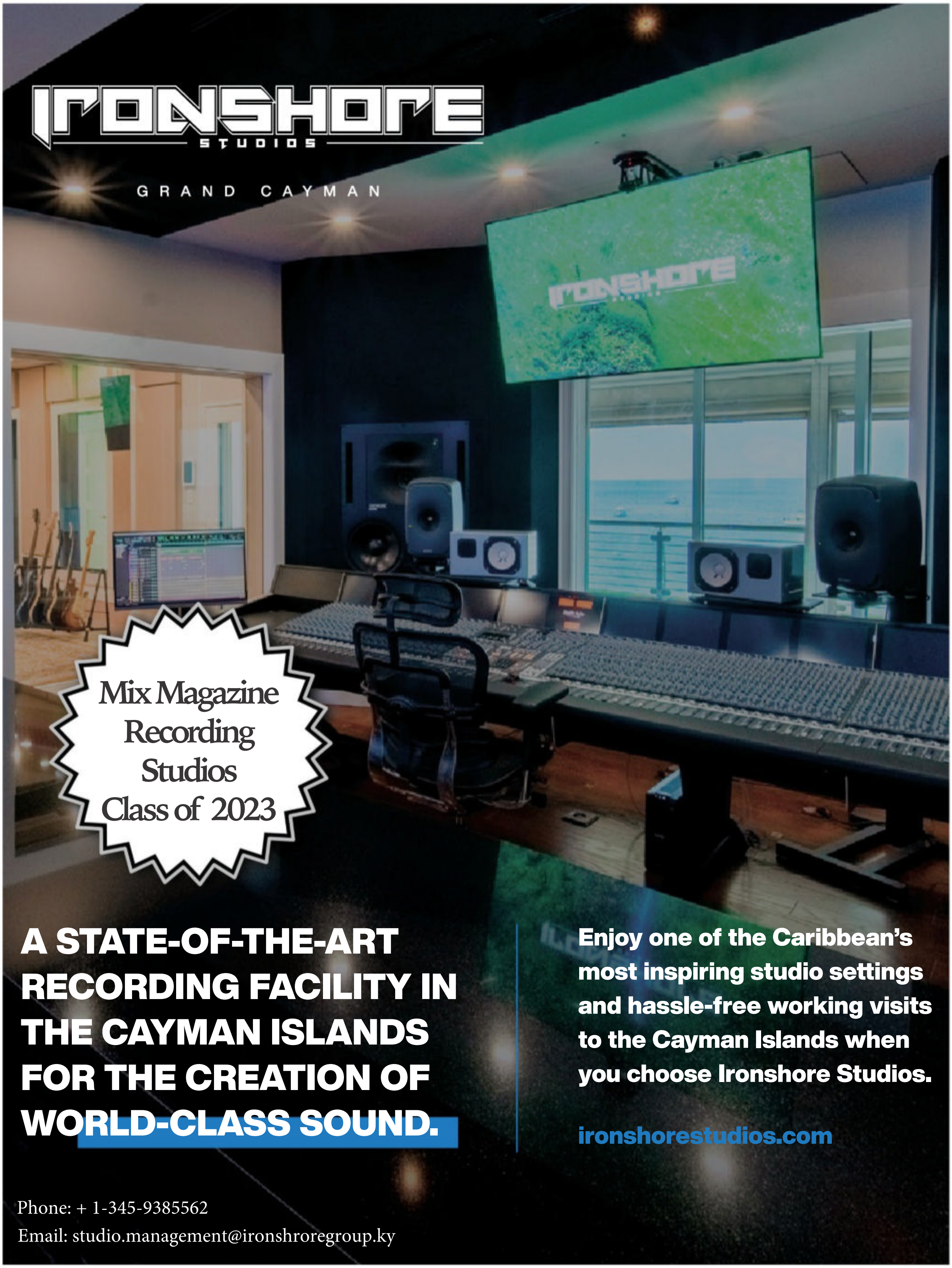


Shown here is the 1970s era Tama Imperialstar kit, finished in a black gloss PVC wrap, that Gil Moore used in the early days of Triumph's touring success. The kit features shells made of Luan (also known as Philippine Mahogany.) The shells were coated on the inside by a Zola coating (sometimes referred to as Granitone.) This coating material was designed to provide enhanced high frequencies and attack. All the toms are single headed concert toms, including the 6 x 8, 7 x 10, 8 x 12, 9 x 13, 10 x 14, 10 x 15, 11 x 15 and 13 x 16 suspended toms, and 16 x 16 and 18 x 18 floor toms. The bass drums measure 14 x 22, while the metal snare is 5 1/2 x 14 model.

This comes from the book *Crash: The World's Greatest Drum Kits,* available at **moderndrummer.com**







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